

NINETY-SIX
S E R M O N S

ON PLAIN AND
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE LATE REVEREND
T H O M A S P Y L E,

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Published by his Son PHILIP PYLE, A. M.

THE THIRD EDITION,
CAREFULLY REVISED AND CORRECTED BY THE EDITOR.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR G. ROBINSON, PATER-NOSTER ROW;
AND R. BEATNIPPE, BOOKSELLER, NORWICH.

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M.DCC.LXXXV.



# CSOENRT ME N TIS

ON FLAIN AND  
S E R M O N I  
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SERMON



## S E R M O N I.

GENESIS iii. 19.

*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*

**I** Imagine with myself, that most people, who read this text, are apt to view it with a sorrowful eye; as containing a severe sentence, a divine judgment, upon the whole human race, on account of the trespass committed by our first parents. They take the words to signify such a degree of toil, and uneasy labour, for the support of life, as is sufficient, in some measure, to cut off its best pleasures, to sour its natural enjoyments.

They are confirmed in this notion, by the two foregoing verses; where they find a curse pronounced upon the very earth itself, for Adam's sake. "Curfed is the ground---

“ in sorrow shalt thou eat of it---thorns also  
 “ and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee :  
 “ and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.”

Now all this rigid interpretation proceeds entirely, from mens not attending to the main design of the things here spoken about ; or to the nature of the language, in which they are expressed ; but especially to the Whole of what Moses has said, concerning the creation, life, and fall of man.

“ To have, or to get, and to eat bread,” signifies, to procure all the necessaries, or conveniences of life ; food, raiment, house, refreshments. To get these by the “ sweat of the face,” does not absolutely imply painful labour, or cruel uncomfortable drudgery, but only a diligent and prudent activity ; or a greater degree of labour, than many others are wont to exert, or than man in general needed to have exerted, had he preserved his innocence, and kept his paradise. In like manner as when St. Paul advises Christians, to “ work out their salvation with fear and trembling ;” the Apostle does not mean, that religious duty is a matter of terror and affrightment, but of manly care, and our best industry.

Again ;



## S E R M O N I.

3

Again ; when we read that “ the ground “ was cursed for Adam’s sake ;” let us observe what ground this was ; not the whole earth ; God forbid ! For God blessed the earth, exceedingly ; continued his blessing to it until the flood, which came upon it for new wickednesses ; and repeated the same blessing, after the flood was taken off. No ! the ground was the ground of Paradise ; that garden of pleasure, which God had blest and adorned in a peculiar manner. That was now cursed---not rendered waste, or utterly barren, in the strict sense of a curse : but these are comparative expressions, with which that language abounds.

Thus, though Angels excell in wisdom ; though the Heavens, the seat of God’s habitation, are most glorious ; yet so infinitely short are they of the divine wisdom and the divine purity, that God is said to “ charge “ his Angels with folly ;” and the “ Heavens “ are not clean in his sight.” So this hal-  
lowed ground was cursed : which only implies, that it was less blessed, than before. It was deprived of all its uncommon beauties, all its spontaneous fruitfulness. It was levelled with the common ground, and laid

open to the adjoining fields. But still it retained its natural, essential virtues. For, as far as we can learn of it, the country where this garden grew, has continued through all ages, a most wholesome, as well as fertile one.

The next words, "in sorrow shalt thou eat of it," if they be meant concerning this particular parcel of ground, can denote merely thus much; namely, that if Adam, or any of his posterity, came again to inhabit, or to visit, that place; they should find it, in comparison with what it had been, a sorrowful abode; stript of all its paradise-glories, reduced to a parity with the rest of the earth; whose fruits, though exceeding good in their kinds both for the use and delight of man, could not now be reaped without so much cultivation and labour, as, considering how little was required in paradise, might be called trouble or sorrow.

Moreover; when this once distinguished spot, was thrown open to the adjacent land; it might well partake of the same qualities, or "bring forth thorns and thistles." This was indeed a dishonour, a sort of curse upon paradise (they were no original natives there) but, as to the Globe at large, prepared by the  
gracious



# S E R M O N I.

5

gracious Providence for the reception of Adam's descendants, they are no curse at all. They, and every thing else we see around us, from the "cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop" "that groweth upon the wall," from the noblest plant in your fields or gardens to the meanest shrub or weed that exists, all answer some admirable purpose or other, are all useful in their places, and verify what the royal Psalmist declares, that this earth of ours, with all the curse which some people have dreamt about, is "full of the riches and "goodness of the Lord!"

Once more; when God told our first parent, that he, and all who came from him, should "eat the herb of the field;" the plain sense was, that, instead of the singular, supernatural delights, he enjoyed in paradise; he must now live upon the products of the ordinary ground, and take pains for them too. But then they were to be very much worth his pains: the pleasure they would yield him, would be his sufficient recompence. It was not a slender or scanty provision, which the good Creator left for him, and for us. No! the table of present nature, is fully and finely spread: the necessaries of life lie open, in

B 3

great

great abundance : even the dainties and delicacies of it, are almost innumerable ! Yet still, comparatively with Paradise, the earth, in a highly figurative stile, may be said to be cursed.

Further yet ; when the Psalmist had been reckoning up all the exquisite furniture of this our globe, in its present condition ; and then observes that, in order to attain the blessings it produces, man must “ go forth to his labour, until the evening ; ” ---he does not mention this last article as any derogation from the Creator’s goodness, or as the smallest mark of his vengeance upon mankind ; but, quite the reverse, as the highest instance of divine wisdom and benevolence towards us. “ O Lord,” says he, “ how manifold are thy works ! In wisdom hast thou made them all ! The earth is full of thy riches.” By which he clearly means, according to the sense of the very Text I have been explaining, that ‘ The supreme Governor has consulted the proper nature, the true interest, the real pleasure of man ; by so ordering things, that, in general at least, the comfortable accomodations of his present life, cannot be acquired without due labour, industry, and activity.

My



My design, in what follows, is to illustrate this great truth;

I. From the account which the holy scripture has given us, concerning the life of mankind;

II. From our own reason, from nature, fact, and constant experience.

I. When man was first sent out of paradise into the wide world, to manage its produce for his future support; his skill and manner of doing this, was doubtless narrow and imperfect. Providence had replenished the earth with a vast variety of good things; had endowed man with suitable faculties to discern, and to enjoy them. But this was to be a work of time: and his enjoyments were gradually to rise, with his ingenuity, or attention. However, the mere necessities for sustaining the animal life, were ready at his hand; the labour, requisite to procure them, was very tolerable: and a proportional pleasure always rewarded his first pains.

In the point of cloathing for the body, you read, that “the Lord God made coats of skin, and cloathed them.” It is likely, or possible at least, that God might immediately direct the yet unexperienced creatures to this

expedient for the supply of their present need. But the words do not necessarily convey that meaning. For as we, at this time, very rightly say, that God gives us our daily bread, and bestows cloathing upon us, as He does upon the lilies of the field; while yet our own hands must manufacture them, and without our own workmanship we should certainly want them;---so the antient sacred language ascribes every thing to the Creator; as being the original Author of all the abilities, whereby his creatures either understand or execute any thing. Thus, God provided the skins; though Adam perhaps might teach himself the use and application of them.

-In process of time, observations naturally increased; and all practical knowledge ripened so fast, as to contract mens labours, in many necessary articles: and though they were multiplied in many others, yet fresh conveniences, fresh enjoyments, were multiplied along with them.

And thus our first parents drew out a life of very extensive length, without any such fatigues, as would hasten death, or bring them to an early decay.

Soon



Soon after They were gone, we meet with a remarkable passage, relating to Noah. His father, at his birth, foretold that he would prove an extraordinary genius; that he would discover new means of rendering tillage, and all rural business, more expeditious, more easy to mankind. So he gave him a name, answering to his character. For the word Noah properly denotes ease, rest, or consolation. "This same" (Son) "shall comfort us concerning our work, and toil of our hands, because of the ground, which the Lord hath cursed." Accordingly, in the ninth chapter, you see a considerable improvement, of which he was author, after the flood; namely, his finding out the method of making wine. But this, in all probability, was only one, among his many other inventions, towards heightening the relish of social life.

Thus, for several ages, did the virtuous part of mankind pass their days in an agreeable mixture of labours and pleasures; in employments, the most simple, and yet the most useful; in the delightful arts of husbandry; in the toils of sowing and planting, sweetly rewarded with the returns of reaping what they sowed, and tasting the fruits their labour

labour produced; in the care of cattle, and plentifully feeding upon the flesh as well as milk of the flock. A mode of living, which the greatest men rather honoured, than despised; which made kings themselves happy, while it was carried on with diligence and sobriety.

But, as soon as ever plenty begot pride; when arts and sciences were refined, into grandeur and extravagance; when once the lust of power broke in upon right and property, disdainful of humble industry; then men strove to be rich, on purpose to be idle; and even chose to be miserable, rather than not be great. The subjects soon copied the example of their princes. Luxury and laziness, once linked together, were quickly followed by all the black train, that never fails to attend them; sicknesses, surfeits, maladies, and diseases; that physicians themselves have not names for one quarter of them. So began ambition, wars, and robberies; all the violence of the guilty, upon the innocent and peaceable. Hence, while many left off all moderate labour; the rest must, inevitably, either have too much of it, or submit to be starved.

labour

After



After this manner life was gradually shortened ; by breaking our original constitution, and ‘ spoiling,’ as we say, ‘ the very breed of ‘ mankind.’ So that from the primitive days, of many hundreds, or almost a thousand years, spent in temperate industry ; we see ourselves reduced to the poor standard of our “ three-  
“ score years and ten.” And though some few amongst us, either by particular strength, or particular prudence, may drag on to four-score ; yet it seldom is a matter of much boasting : it generally proves “ a strength of  
“ labour and sorrow : it soon passes away,  
“ and we are gone.”

Thus far I think is clear, with regard to Scripture ; that neither the pains nor the shortness of human life, were the original design of good Providence, but are the later offspring of mens own wilful corruption. Industry and exercise were adapted by Almighty God, to sweeten, as well as to prolong it.

Let us now see how this matter stands, in our very nature ; according to observation, and constant experience.

II. Man is an excellent compound of mind and body. His actions, with all their consequences, are influenced either by his reason,  
or

or his passions. Between the body and mind, there must be a certain balance, a certain harmony maintained; or Both will suffer, in their powers and operations. If reason guides and moderates the passions, the latter are noble assistants to the former; the whole man is in his natural, easy, pleasing state. The contrary produces that confusion, which is always attended with deformity, and self-dislike.

There are therefore these three things, that should be the principal aim of such a creature: Virtue, Health, Pleasure. Let us try then, whether the provident Creator had not an eye to them all, in ordaining us a life of business and labour.

1. As for Virtue, I may venture to call Industry her strongest safeguard and security. Our minds are of a most active, restless temper. Something or other they must have, to work upon. If they be not fed with what is good, they run unavoidably into what is evil. Study and contemplation are the remedy of but few: the vast majority have different engagements, as their constant preservative against vice. Proper labour is a perpetual entertainment: it diverts us from a thousand objects of vanity, and hurtful amusement,



keeps all the passions regular and calm; curbs the wanton fallies of our wishes and imaginations. Even the richest man living, is in perpetual danger, without some business: and, though he may not do much mischief to others, he can hardly fail of doing a great deal to himself.

But the usual and most fatal hazard of idleness, is the Want, to which it reduces men. For it naturally leads to poverty: and such poverty, as naturally, ends in the destruction of all virtue. Many a man, indeed, will keep up a kind of tenderness to human nature, for some considerable time; and will do his neighbours no harm, while he does neither them, nor himself, any good. And it is not often, that men will invade the rights of others; till, by indolence or profuseness, they have squandered away all that was their own. But then their call grows loud: necessities are pressing: and you can never rely upon a man's conscience, towards his neighbour; when he has lost all prudence, all regard for himself.

In one word; the industrious poor man may very fairly be supposed punctually honest: but no man can become a beggar, through  
sloth-

slothfulness, or extravagance; without first casting away all manly sense of decency and duty.

2. God has consulted our Bodily Health, by putting us into a life of labour and activity.

They who study the frame of an human body, though a perfect insight into this divine work must never be expected, yet thus much they clearly discover---That it contains sundry nerves and vessels, marvellously wrought and placed; the use of which, for carrying on life and health, depends upon a particular tone or spring, that is to be preserved in its vigour by various means, but by none so effectually, or so constantly, as by regular exercise. Digestion of food, secretion of humours, fine spirits, good blood, nay even good nature itself, are all derived from this source. Sloth, and lazy rest, relaxes every fibre; and unfits us for the functions of healthy life: as musical instruments, or the bow, become useless, when you unbrace the strings. Proper labour does quite the contrary; puts all parts upon their duty; works our food into pure nourishment; makes the soul cheerful, by rendering the  
body



body alert and lively. To prove this, we need no other witnesses, than the ruddy looks, the strong arms, the brisk appetites, the sweet sleep, of the busy, and the working man; the pale faces, the dejected if not melancholy spirits, the sickly stomachs, the restless days and nights, so common among the sedentary, the lustful, the debauched part of the world.

3. Therefore lastly: Providence has blest the diligent man's life, with the truest Pleasure. To have the satisfaction of knowing that your minds and hands are employed in the way directed by God and Nature; to reflect that you spend your time in doing service to yourselves and others; that you help to maintain creatures of God's own creating, nay help to support the whole community around you: (for what is a prince, or a court, or a nation, without working hands, as well as working heads?) all these are matter of solid comfort, and give a man not only genuine pleasure, but a relish of honour too. For as nothing is so sweet to a good person, as the fruit that springs from his own honest labour; so, among all the characters and titles the world so fondly admires, the name of an Industrious man

man was never denied its value, by any people upon earth. And were you to enter into a comparison, between the reputable merchant, the ingenious artificer, the diligent tradesman, nay the lowest labourer in the field, and the mere gentleman of fortune, with nothing but sports in his head, and diversions in his heart, or else with all his time a burden upon his hands; you would not stand long, in your sober thoughts, before you determined, which of the two does most benefit to his country, and most honour to his God.

I could here pursue abundance more such premises as these: but the time calls me to a short conclusion.

I, then. If we would rightly apply what has been said; let us all endeavour to suppress the love of idleness, and of an idle life, as the worst temper that can befall, or plague the world. Let each man shun it, as his bane and ruin; as the bait that will draw him into every vice, that will kill every commendable or generous principle of his nature. Let them who are in power, persecute and banish it, with all Those who practise or promote it; as that universal poison, which  
has



has always tainted private men, corrupted families, and overthrown the most flourishing kingdoms.

2. Then ; let no person in lower station, any longer entertain a mean opinion, or any false, discontented notions, concerning his life of labour. It is the life of Nature's own concerting, of God's own appointing ; for the present good of mankind, in order to their future, everlasting happiness. It has the most manifest reason, the most excellent examples, the best divine history, to speak its praises. And though it may possibly be the lot of Some amongst you, to bear too large a share of the harder, the heavier, part ; yet be not discouraged ! Remember from whence this hardship proceeds---not from any fixed intention or decree of your Maker, but from the vices of the world you live in. Remember, that a day is coming, wherein all your labour, your patience, and resignation, shall meet their full reward ; and you will have no cause to repine, that " in the sweat of your face you have eaten your bread."

To God, only wise---

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but always retained private men, corrupted families, and overturned the most flourishing kingdoms.

Then, let no person in lower station, any longer entertain a mean opinion, or any false, discontented notions, concerning the life of this world. It is the life of nature: a vain enjoyment, of God's own appointing; and the present good of mankind, in order to their future, everlasting happiness. It has the most useful reason, the most excellent example, the best divine history, to speak as you please. And though it may possibly be the lot of some amongst you, to bear too long a share of the burden, the heavier part, yet be not discouraged! Remember from whence this hardship proceeds--not from any fault, infirmity or defect of your Maker, but from the vices of the world you live in. Remember, that every day is coming, wherein all your labour, your patience, and indignation, shall meet their full reward; and you will have no cause to regret, that "in the sweat of your face you have eaten your bread."

To God, only will...



## S E R M O N II.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 8.

*Whatsoever things are lovely----think on these things.*

**T**HIS is one of those Epistles wherein St. Paul, upon the whole, had a good-natured set of men to deal with. Though, in the second and third chapters, you find there were some amongst them, that had been creating disputes, and sowing the seeds of division; not in really essential matters; but (which is commonly the case with religious controversy) in imaginary ones;----“about  
“ Jewish circumcision and ceremonies; how  
“ far they were abrogated, or still in force;  
“ and whether they concerned the Gentile  
“ Converts, or a man could be a Christian  
“ without them.”

For suppressing such altercations, or at least for preventing the evils that might arise from them ; the Apostle advises both parties to behave with proper temper. “ Let nothing  
“ be done through strife, or vain-glory: but,  
“ in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others  
“ better than themselves. Look not every man  
“ on his own things,” on his own abilities, on his own arguments, or opinions, “ but also on  
“ the things of others. Let this mind be in  
“ you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Thus, whenever any inquiries or controversies are set on foot, even about Fundamentals ; let but a christian spirit moderate and guide them, and they will both begin and end in that “ peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”

But, as an effectual remedy, that would either divert men from engaging in such debates at all, or else would secure their conduct under them ; he here proposes to their most serious consideration, a summary of the high and important duties of religion : those, in particular, which have a natural tendency to exalt our minds, to enoble our spirits ; which at the same time give a lustre to Christianity itself, and endear the persons of all who sincerely profess it.

He



He begins with a peculiar emphasis; placing at the head, "Whatsoever things are true--- that we found our religion upon a firm belief of its truth; that we form all our notions in it, with a strict regard to their reasonableness and evidence.

"Whatsoever things are honest"--it should rather be translated, "whatsoever things are seemly, or venerable"---that our behaviour be attended with that gravity and decorum, which is wont to attract the reverence of mankind.

"Whatsoever things are just, and pure"---that we be not barely or legally just, but conscientious and compassionate, in our dealings with men; and careful of all that inward integrity, which may recommend us to God.

Finally; "Whatsoever things are lovely"---that we aspire to that degree, to those instances, of religion; which are the fruit of refined morals, and of ingenuous minds; which will not draw after them a mere popular applause, or the praises of a giddy multitude; but will command real esteem; and win men over to imitation, by the shining excellency of the things themselves.

These last named articles I would now more particularly describe, and lay before you. Which I would do, as they have respect,

I. To God :

II. To our neighbour :

III. To ourselves.

I, then, Let me observe what we should aim at, as lovely in our religion; with immediate relation to Almighty God ; - to our sentiments of Him, of his divine providence, and commands ; or to our worship of Him. In the former, it should be our especial care, to frame all our apprehensions of the Supreme Being, by the plainest maxims, by our clearest ideas of his moral perfections ; and to regulate all our reasonings, to limit all our conclusions, concerning his dispensations towards us, by the evident discoveries He has made of his nature and will. And sure I am, that, whatever wild, unaccountable things, some men may have said about God ; yet whatever God has been pleased to declare about Himself, either by the light of our own uncorrupted reason, or by his express word and revelation, is all perfectly uniform, and consistent ; terminating in nothing more or less, than in the great and amiable character of

“ One



“One universal Creator ; one infinitely wise,  
“good, powerful, and impartial Governor  
“over all his intelligent creatures.”

We are, next, to seek what is lovely, and to avoid whatever is disgustful, or deformed; in our devotion, or worship of God. And here, the proper marks of distinction, which raise the truly pious, above the superstitious, or enthusiastic worshipper, are the circumstances that accompany, and the good principles that produce, these outward expressions of reverence. I will just point out to you, two or three of the most considerable.

Let your worship always follow, and keep pace with, your cool, deliberate thoughts, of your Maker : let your devotion flow from a right understanding, and a pure conviction, of your duty towards Him. This will preserve it calm, will render it a rational service ; ---the homage of a mind, sensible, and well-cultivated.

Again : that our devotion may be worthy of God, or lovely in the eyes of men ; it should be unaffected ; free, as much as possible, from all the grimace, the outside shew, that exhibits the nauseous appearance of the formalist, and the hypocrite. Worship is

certainly the gravest thing in the world : the whole soul and essence of it lies within. When the outward part is over-acted, is continually pressing to be observed ; all the graces of it are lost, or look tawdry and glaring. Such a worshipper is exactly like a conceited painter, who delights in nothing but drapery ; and spoils the original native beauty, with ill-fancied, ridiculous fineries. Ostentation in religion, as foppery in dress, betrays itself to an ordinary eye, by the superfluous ornaments wherewith it abounds.

Lastly : Devotion will want its loveliest grace, if it be not performed with modesty, candour, and good-will towards all mankind. The sincere worshipper has nothing proud, or sour, in him. He never comes before his Maker, full of himself ; to “ thank God, “ that he is not as other men are ;” but first looks into himself ; and then wishes well to, heartily hopes the best of, all his fellow-creatures. For, in short, they who arrogate to themselves the only acceptable way of worshipping God, have ever the least of that spirit and truth, without which no worship can be acceptable to Him. Our completest services are so short of perfection, that all the  
little



little value we can give them, must spring entirely from the humility and charity, which goes along with them.

II. The second branch of religious actions, wherein we should endeavour after that behaviour, which is amiable, as well as exemplary, comprehends our duties to each other. These I shall reduce under the two general heads, of justice, and benevolence,

Justice, or a regard to truth and right in all transactions between man and man, has so visible, so universal a connection, with our present peace and safety; that the very necessity of it, the immediate interest which every person has in it, is some tie upon him to practise it. And they who observe it merely from a sense of this necessity, claim a proportional measure of commendation.

But the perfect praise and honour of justice, can only exist, where a man has all the advantages of Secrecy; all the temptations of dishonest gain; consistent with an unbroken character, and an unblemished reputation:—when, without the least danger of a Discovery, with all the good grace imaginable, you have an opportunity of imposing upon the ignorant, and safely carrying off the spoil! Then, I say, to

to be as regardful of what is right, as if ten thousand eyes were fastened upon you; to abhor the private fraud, as much as you would the public scandal of it; to put your neighbour's interest upon the level with your own, out of love to him as your own image, out of reverence to him as the image of God; -- This is absolute piety, as well as justice -- it is Religion, in her genuine colours, in her own most lovely character!

Benevolence, or charity, has a large field for its exercise, and is big with a noble variety of virtues. And every one of these again, is attended with some particular circumstances, proper to seasons and persons, that give it uncommon dignity and worth.

The doing some good services to each other, is utterly unavoidable. There is no living, no subsisting, without it. But what the Text recommends to Christians, under the title of lovely, are kindnesses that might be omitted, without infamy; but cannot be practised, without deserving the highest pitch of admiration!

For instance: An act of disinterested generosity, free from selfish views, from the desire, or even possibility, of any return; liberality



liberality and compassion surmounting personal prejudices, conquering the bias of party notions, nay, differences in religion itself, often the most violent of all differences ; --- This is a charity, truly elevated and sublime ! Our blessed Saviour has painted it, like an exquisite Master, in that most edifying parable of the unfortunate Jew, and the merciful Samaritan.

There you are presented with a miserable traveller, robbed, naked, and half-deprived of life, left by his own countrymen, to lie weltering in his blood, without the least expression of pity, or offer of relief. Nay, the Priest and the Levite, the men whose sacred function should have inspired them with the tenderest sentiments ; even They could see the doleful object without relenting, and “ passed by on the other side.” But the Samaritan, a stranger, an Enemy, when he beheld him, was unable to shut up his bowels against a man, whom his whole church and nation deemed an Heretick. He poured oil into his wounds ; bound them up ; set him on his own beast ; carried him to an inn ; spent his time, his money, and his credit, upon a helpless creature, whom he was morally

morally certain never to see or hear of more.

Thus there may be, there frequently is, the most consummate virtue, where some men conclude there can be no virtue at all.

The scriptures give us a similar instance, in the memorable affection of Jonathan to David---to a man, whom the King his Father had represented as his rival, as a competitor for the succession of the crown---to a man who, he was told, stood in his light; and, if not taken off, would debar him from the supreme honour this world can afford. But all these surmises were without effect. David's innocence and blameless conduct, left no room for Jonathan's suspicion. The friendship was built upon that inviolable bottom! And "he did kindness to David, and loved him as his own soul."

Again: Our blessed Lord mentions a way of doing good, where the "left hand knoweth not what the right hand doeth." Without question, the modest veil that is drawn over some generous actions, brightens and exalts their merit, asmuch as a fond love of applause would tarnish and debase it. Those beneficent spirits, who industriously take care never to let their praises be founded for the noblest deeds,



deeds, must do the good for the sake of goodness. They make virtue a real thing, not an empty name. They make worth and honour substantial matters, not the visionary offspring of fashion or fancy;----invariably the same, while acting by themselves and unseen, as if seen and extolled by the whole earth. And must it not be an amiable oblation, in the eyes of God; when, regardless of that glory which is so tempting among men, we refer all to "our Father who seeth in secret?"

Further still: There is no piece of charity more admirable, none more affecting, more surprisngly beautiful, than the forgiveness of injuries. It is a conquest over the most stubborn passion we have; and discovers humanity wrought up to its highest purity, brought to its last refinement and perfection. It gives you, at one view, the glorious art of melting down your adversary, and of commanding yourself.

I verily believe there is not, in all the histories ever written, an incident displayed with such energy and simplicity, as the story of Joseph, in the first book of Moses. Here you behold a man, whose superior talents set him up, as the mark of envy to his own brethren.

brethren. If nature had not strongly pleaded in his behalf, they would forthwith have commenced his bloody executioners. They could hardly be prevailed upon, to content themselves with selling him for a slave ! In that state, he passes through a variety of trials ; till a steady course of virtuous wisdom, raised him to almost the summit of human grandeur ; and made him governor over all Egypt.

Thither were these barbarous brothers forced to come, begging for food ; prostrate at the feet of the very man, whom they had so cruelly treated. Oh ! what an advantage was here for a man in power, provoked with injuries, fired with resentment, to strike terror into the hearts of such captives and offenders ! They expected no less ! They became speechless at the sight of him ! and “ were troubled at his presence !”

But revenge is not the glory of great minds. Joseph recovers them from all their apprehensions, with a countenance and language full of compassion. “ Come near to me, I pray you : I am your brother : be not grieved, that ye sold me hither.” He would not suffer them to cast an eye inward, upon their own guilt ; but turned all their attention to the  
merciful



merciful hand, with which Providence directed the whole affair. "Be not angry with yourselves: it was not you that sent me hither, but God." No man can read such a narrative as this, or contemplate so lovely a picture; without being warmed and lifted in his inclinations, towards something above the common conduct of human life!

To these I might add several dispositions, that partake of this superlative excellency, about which I am speaking: such as Rejoicing at the welfare of others, wherein we ourselves have no share, nor can be in the least measure concerned. Men of some tempers (but, surely, they are very depraved ones) feel as if they were hurt and degraded, in proportion as they see their neighbour advanced. Whereas a manly spirit bears good-will to all, that bear the form of man; is not meanly circumscribed within itself, but takes delight in seeing others delighted; derives pleasure to itself from every instance of divine goodness to all around it, and adds joy to those who observe its generous complacency in their prosperity.

So again: To be communicative, frank, and open, in imparting our sentiments, in informing others by our conversation, may well

well pass for one of these lovely qualities. A morose silence, and a surly reservedness, may sometimes dwell with large abilities; but can be no embellishment to them. The knowledge of a liberal mind, is free and diffusive; strives to be useful, by spreading itself; and, by being useful, becomes truly amiable.

III. It is now time I should consider the last rank of religious concerns; those that have an immediate relation to Ourselves; and which (speaking generally) may be said to consist in such a sedateness or compoſure of mind, by the good government of our passions, by a prudent command of our appetites and inclinations, as will best carry us forward, through the whole rational, moral, and social life.

Those persons who are so circumstanced, as to meet with little fuel to inflame desire; with few strong temptations, or enticing opportunities, to indulge the "pride of life," and the pleasures of sense; are certainly commendable, if they contentedly keep within the compass allotted them by Providence. They are virtuous, if they do not follow after, and seek out, incentives to vice.

Still,



Still, however, it must be confessed, that Virtue shews her brightest splendor, not by shunning, but by resisting, the allurements of sin. Thus, whenever you see a man surrounded with the choicest gifts of fortune, with plenty of every thing that can pamper each fleshly desire, and yet moderate in the enjoyment of them all;---Or one that, with the finest accomplishments, carries himself humbly to inferiors, and is courteous even to those that are most meanly qualified;---Or if you see the man of authority, stooping where he might domineer, gentle and condescending to those, whom he might controul with a frown, might terrify with a word;---Above all, whenever you view the great Heart, that stifles his anger, where he could let it loose with the most dreadful advantage; that, invincibly patient, suffers under, and prays for, the hand which persecutes him;---Here, I say, you behold a sight, lovely indeed!---human nature soaring to its divine origin, resuming that image of God, after which it was at first created.

IV. Having thus briefly described what St. Paul calls the lovely, the more winning or engaging, instances of human behaviour,

I shall conclude with recommending them to your serious thoughts and practice.

“Think on these things,” says the Apostle.

Look upon them as the noblest end of morality; the noblest improvement that can possibly be made of it. Value them, as the Characteristics of your Christianity; as the most effectual means to gain you the favour of God, the universal esteem of each other. And, if you had no argument beside, take this for an infallible certainty---that “That must be the truest Religion, which teaches “the best things.”

Again; “Think on these things,” as more obligatory upon Christians, than upon any men whatever: since they are not only enjoined by the precepts, but have been exemplified, been brought to life, by the actions and sufferings, of our blessed Master. In Whom we have an intire draught of that solid, unaffected piety to God, that tenderness and goodness to men, that unspotted purity and greatness of mind, so far surpassing what the Heathen Sages, with all their boasted refinements, either practised, or even taught.

Finally; “Think on these things,” as more useful, more necessary, more ornamental, than



all others :--that, while learning may beget pride ; while disputes may blow up our passions ; while zeal, raging in party against party\*, may expose our whole profession to the prejudices and scorn of unbelievers ; these dispositions of undefiled and christian virtue, will be sure to raise its reputation, to convert all its enemies into friends.

These are the things, that will dwell in you, that will continue with you. They are the seeds of the heavenly life, sown in your minds by the wise Creator, when he put you into this state of discipline and probation. And if you will suffer them to take root, they will not leave you, will not die or perish with your bodies in the grave ; but, immortal as the soul to which they belong, will follow Her through all her future existence, and be her source of happiness to all eternity.

The peace of God, &c.

D 2 S E R M O N

\* The Reader is desired to take Notice, that many of these Sermons were preached at a time, when religious controversy ran very high amongst us.





## S E R M O N III.

JAMES i. 13.

*Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth He any man.*

**SUCH** is the nature of man, as a reasonable Being, that it is scarce possible for him, be he ever so depraved, to erase from his mind all sense of the beauty and obligations of virtue, or of the deformity and evil of vice. There is a wise, a dutiful behaviour, adapted to our several stations and characters, which has a lustre in it, that strikes the eyes of even the most profligate mortals: while, at the same time, there is a baseness in the opposite conduct, attended with a secret remorse that pursues the sinner into his closest retirement, and will one day find entrance into the most hardened conscience.

What, I now say, evidently appears, from the desire that almost all wicked men discover, of throwing off the blame they incur by their vices; and of laying it upon any thing, or any person, rather than themselves. They perpetrate villainies, which they blush to confess are their own free, deliberate choice, They knowingly and wilfully produce the Effects; but would foist in something else, instead of themselves, for the guilty Cause.

Here therefore is a plain argument, that every vicious practise has something, in its very nature, odious and distasteful; since even its authors, even its parents, are ashamed to call it their own. Why else do they seek for any apology? Why should an habitual sinner take any pains, to find a covering for his sins? Why should he attempt to varnish over the crimes, which he does not presume to justify? In short, why is the action committed; and then the fault (for a fault there must be somewhere) ascribed to temptation:---to temptation from natural constitution; or from bad company; or from the Devil; or from business; or from singular difficulties, and hard circumstances of life?

St,



St. James had an eye to all these pretences, commonly urged by finners, when he gave his Christians this solemn lesson of caution. But he had probably, in his more immediate view, a case peculiarly frequent throughout the earlier ages of the Gospel; namely, the case of "persecution for the sake of Christianity." Under which he might observe some persons shrinking, and behaving cowardly; or, perhaps, renouncing their christian profession, for fear of further sufferings; and then pleading, that "the trial was too severe, that God "and his providence inflicted upon them "more than man is able to bear."

Now these, with all other excuses, the Apostle commands both them and us, by no means to rely upon, or ever to make use of: since they all draw after them, this blasphemous, terrible consequence; that "we are "charging the just and righteous God, with "the voluntary sins of men." "Let no man "say" (even though he be tempted by persecution for conscience sake; much less if it be by any smaller trial of his patience and virtue) "Let him not say, I am tempted of "God. For God cannot be tempted with "evil, neither tempteth He any man."

The force of which words will not only be seen, but felt too I hope, when I shall have considered and explained the several matters following.

I. In what sense we must understand that God, or men, tempt others, and are tempted themselves; as also, how far it is true, that they are incapable of either.

II. When, and in what instances, any man is properly chargeable with the crime, of attributing his temptations, or sins, to God.

III. What unreasonableness and folly men betray in so doing, for the two obvious reasons given by the Apostle: first, that God cannot himself be tempted with evil: secondly, that therefore He can never be supposed, in that manner, to tempt any of his creatures.

I, then: To tempt, is a word used by the scripture-writers, both in a good and a bad, in an innocent and a mischievous, acceptation. The prime notion of it is, to make trial of any person's mind, temper, or behaviour; either for discovering what are his designs, and how he will act, in any particular case; or for setting forth his conduct, as exemplary and instructive to other men. Thus we try,

or



### SERMON III.

or make inquiry into, the sincerity of our friend, or the kindness of our neighbour. Thus the prince tries the loyalty of his subjects; the commander the spirit and bravery of his soldiers, or the strength and policy of his enemy.

According to this interpretation, it is readily allowed, that Almighty God very frequently tempts his reasonable creatures; or puts them upon the exercise of their fidelity and obedience. He tries the hearts of his best servants, by the harder task of sufferings and afflictions; that they may shine as lights in the world, for the imitation of others, for promoting the practice of religious virtue; and at the same time to raise the honour of their own character, to heighten their glory and their reward.

Thus you read, that God "tempted the good and faithful Abraham." Thus He tempted the Children of Israel, to try them, and to "prove them, whether they would keep his commandments or no." So, concerning the more eminently virtuous men, He says, in the prophet Zechariah; "I will bring them through the fire, and will try them as gold is tried." And, in the prophet

phet Daniel; "Many shall be purified, made white, and tried."

You will please to observe here, that God tries men, not because he wants any information; or does not perfectly foresee, how every man will act in any given Case. His trial of us is intended, not for his own information, but for our benefit;---that it may strengthen our fortitude, and submission to the divine Will; may render us influential upon all around us.

But when one Being makes attempt upon the passions, or inclinations, of another; on purpose to seduce it from its Duty, and its Happiness; or for the accomplishing any other malicious design:---This is a temptation, practised only by depraved minds, by reprobate spirits. Such was the Devil's temptation of our first parents: such was his fraudulent attack upon our blessed Saviour, in the wilderness; such are all the allurements to lust and vice, wherewith lewd, licentious mortals, cruelly labour, and often so wickedly rejoice, to corrupt one another.

Again: "The being tempted," in Scripture, not only signifies the act of trying a person, and that person's undergoing such a trial;



trial; but it many times expresses the consequence, or criminal effect, of such a temptation---the falling into the vice, to which a man is tempted. Thus St. Paul advises the Elders of the Galatian Church, to be gentle in their treatment of a Christian who had sinned; "considering yourselves," says he, "lest ye also be tempted"---that is, be enticed to comply with some similar temptation. 'Do not bear too hard,' says the Apostle, 'upon the offending brother. Remember it may possibly, one day or other, be your own case.' So he tells the Thessalonians, what concern he had been under for them, "lest the Tempter should have tempted them," should have actually drawn them from the faith, and "his labour should be in vain." When our Lord therefore teaches us to pray, that "God would not lead us into temptation;" He does not mean we should pray, that 'God would never suffer us at all to be tempted,' but that 'He would graciously assist us in our endeavours not to be overcome by any temptation.' So in another place, He exhorts us to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation"---not to pray, that 'we may escape all possible

possible trial of our virtue; but to pray, that we may pass through such trial, with innocence, and christian resolution.

Now, in these two last-mentioned senses, of sinful temptation, and of sinful compliance with temptation; it is absolutely denied, that "God ever tempteth any man; that He does, directly or indirectly, give birth, either to the temptation itself, or to any of its ill consequences. He always tries us for our good: whenever the trial is turned to evil, the fault, most undoubtedly, lies in ourselves.

II. Well therefore: If the supreme Fountain of wisdom, power, and happiness, cannot possibly be the Source of folly, vice, and misery; if He, who is "of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity without indignation," can never be imagined the patron, or promoter, of that iniquity; into what human heart did it, or can it ever enter, to derive Sin from this original of all Goodness; to make God the cause of a thing, so abhorrent from his divine purity and perfections? In what ways, I say, or in what instances, are men, nay even Christians, guilty of such senseless blasphemy? This is the question, which I am now to resolve,

No



No man alive, I take for granted, who has any conception of religion, or any remaining ideas of good and evil, will dare, in direct assertion, in express words, to charge his vices upon his Maker, and to pronounce his God the Parent of his sins. This is too shocking, too shameful! But then how often is it done as effectually, though a little more modestly, by such pretences and excuses, or by such principles and doctrines, as, if they do not exhibit the same open front, yet do really imply, do really involve, the self-same absurdity?

For example: Many a vicious man will ingenuously allow his scheme of life to be wrong. He will allow the indulgence of his lusts, to be imprudent and unhappy. He will confess, that intemperance is consummate folly; that to command his passions, would be a conduct far nobler and wiser. Well then: What is the salvo, for all his extravagancies? To what Mother does he lay this base offspring of wickedness? Why, truly, "human nature is frail:" and flesh and blood must bear the blame. The corruptions we were born withal, are so prevalent, it seems; that though the religious lessons given us  
to

to rectify them, be fine and admirable in speculation; yet to carry these lessons into practice, is above the powers of a feeble, mortal, man.

But what are men doing, while they argue in this manner? Can you reflect at all upon nature, without reflecting upon the great Author of nature? Our frame and constitution is none of our own workmanship. We could not make a single hair of our heads, either black or white. No one original passion, no one native inclination, was implanted in you by any other hand, than that which at first fashioned both soul and body. To talk therefore, that 'We have such an innate, such an inherent disposition, towards vice, that the united efforts of reason and of grace, are insufficient for making us virtuous and happy;' is at once to clear ourselves, and to impeach our good Creator. For there can be no sort of difference between asserting, that 'God immediately forces us into evil;' and declaring, that 'He has designedly so formed us, as to leave us utterly incapable of withstanding its temptations.'

Secondly:



Secondly: Do you not, after much the same manner, father your sins upon God, when you would vindicate any dishonest dealings, by the peculiar condition and circumstances of your lives? When you plead poverty, or ignorance, in defence of unpardonable, barefaced crimes? When you pretend that your fall from high fortunes into low and mean life, strikes so hard upon a generous spirit, pierces so deep into the delicate part of nature, as to overthrow all your virtue, and to justify the most iniquitous measures you can take for regaining your former figure? Or when the people in trade would persuade us, that business of sundry kinds, is not to be conducted by fantastical rules of exact justice, sobriety, and conscience? Or again, when the politician maintains, that national interests, and the public affairs of kingdoms, can never proceed upon the visionary maxims of Divines and Moralists, upon your gospel sincerity, your religious veracity? What, I say, does all this popular, plausible reasoning, amount to? Certainly, if these things be so; He that made and ordered the world, with all the various stations and

and relations we are placed in, has ordered them strangely ! For if any vice be inseparable from, or unavoidable in, any particular office, character, post, or employment ; if a breach of moral and religious duty, be essentially necessary towards the duly discharging it ; --- then, by consequence, He who is the Author of the one, is the author of the other also. So that every argument of this stamp, brings you at last to the same horrid conclusion ; ---- that ‘ Sin and Providence are met together, that the wisdom of ‘ God and the wickedness of men have kissed ‘ each other.’

Thirdly : Try once more ! See whether you do not “ sin with your mouth, and “ charge God foolishly ;” when you attribute your own spontaneous, deliberate crimes, to the irresistible impulse, or instigation, of the Devil. See whether it is not manifestly the same thing, to declare, that ‘ God has ‘ never given us the means of grace, of virtue, ‘ and happiness ;’ or to insist, that, having ‘ bestowed them upon us, He suffers them to ‘ be inevitably taken from us.’ And can you really suppose, can you seriously believe, that our good Lord has bountifully afforded us  
has
plain



plain rules of life, with a repeated promise of rewards and blessings for obeying those rules; if, at the same time, you dare to alledge, that 'He has granted our bitterest enemy a full licence, to ruin all our honest labours, to debar us from all their precious fruits?'

In one word: To affirm that the Devil ever did, that He ever can, draw any man into Sin, against the man's free will, or without the concurrence of his free consent, is to affirm that God makes a mock of his own laws, and trifles with the salvation of his creatures. It is to shew yourselves the foolish sons of that foolish mother, who said "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

Fourthly and lastly: However harmless their designs may be (for I would judge hardly of no man, for his mere opinions) yet nothing does more flatly impute mens transgressions to their Maker, than the cruel doctrine, that 'God has unconditionally and irreversibly, predestinated all mankind, to eternal joys, or eternal sufferings, in a future state.' For, beyond all controversy, He who absolutely decrees the damnation of

any person ; and, in order to make good that decree, puts him into a world wherein he will offend, wherein he cannot but offend ; demonstrates the real cause of the offence and misery, not to be in the unhappy subject doomed to such a fate, but in Himself, from whose arbitrary Will this necessity proceeded.

So then, though I censure no man, for thinking erroneously, provided it be innocently ; yet I most exceedingly lament and pity him, for judging thus wrongfully, concerning his God, and himself. The one only decree that I know, or read about, which God ever made, respecting the final salvation or reprobation of any man, is this ; that “ Those who are desirous of coming  
“ to Christ, He will in no wise cast out ;  
“ and that upon none but such as wilfully  
“ refuse to come, He will pronounce the  
“ sentence of condemnation.”

In fine : God has given us all, abundant power both to will and to act for our own well-being. So that whoever amongst us fall, by the trials and temptations, which He permits or appoints them to undergo ;  
fall



### S E R M O N III. 51

fall entirely through their neglect or abuse of that power. To convince you, how inconsistent with every rational as well as religious principle, are the abovementioned pleas and pretences to the contrary; shall be reserved for the subject of another discourse.

To the King Eternal---





## S E R M O N IV.

JAMES i. 13.

*Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.*

**I** HAVE already finished the two former parts of the subject, proposed from these words. Wherein I have shewn you, what is meant by temptation; and in what sense God may be affirmed, or denied, to tempt mankind. I have also considered in what manner, and in what instances, men are guilty of attributing their temptations to God, or his providence. I have allowed that they do this, not in direct, explicit terms; but by certain pretences and excuses, or by certain false, unscriptural doctrines, which must necessarily reflect upon their Creator, as the proper cause of their follies and misconduct.

E 3

Such

Such is their complaint, about the corruption, or infirmities, of nature; about the difficulties, that attend their particular situation, or the particular business in which they are engaged. Such, again, is their notion concerning the instigation of the Devil; their doctrine of unconditional predestination and grace. All of which I have proved to be so many real impeachments of God's purity, justice, and goodness, in his dealings with his rational creatures.

III. The unreasonableness and impiety of these several pretences, I have reserved as matter for the present discourse.

Now the Apostle's argument, to evince the general absurdity of the thing, is strong and indisputable. "For God," says he, "cannot himself be tempted with evil. Consequently it is impossible, that He should tempt any of his creatures, with a design to injure, or draw them into evil."

It is a prime notion of God, level to the meanest understanding; that 'As He is the head of all power, the fountain of all wisdom; so must He be also, of truth and rectitude.' He who comprehends in himself, all perfection----how can He be supposed



supposed to will, or to reap the least pleasure from, the deformity of his own productions? How can He but delight in the regularity and happiness of every creature, who is himself infinitely wise, good, and happy? How can He be imagined to place any Being in a state of inevitable transgression, or misery; who is himself the everlasting source of excellence and felicity? This, I say, is unanswerable demonstration, in the main. But we must speak to the particular pleas of wicked men.

1. First then: What complaint can we justly make, concerning the “corruption, “or radical depravity, of our human constitution?” You alledge (and many Teachers have delivered it, as a capital article of religious doctrine) that “you are originally “wicked, born in sin, by nature prone to “evil, children of wrath.” All which expressions, as they have been interpreted from the scripture language (which language I shall consider presently) may supply Some among you, with a specious cloak for your sins; Others, with sad, uncomfortable reflections, on the nature and condition of man. But then they must, at the same time, fill your

E 4 hearts

hearts with most dreadful ideas of your Creator ; who framed, and gave you, this vile nature. So that, while you are pleading the one, you cannot but be utterly confuted and confounded by the other. Thus will it ever fare, with all false doctrines ; and with this, above all ! Every thinking mind, feels an unwillingness, an inability, to embrace them !

But let us trace the matter a little further, from fact, experience, and scripture. Has this corruption (this hereditary corruption from Adam) entirely taken away your noble faculty of reason ? Does it prevent your discerning the nature of things and actions, the difference between good and evil ? Has it so blinded you, that you cannot (though you employ ever so strict attention) discover an apparent obligation, a clear law, an evident interest, a manifest pleasure, in pursuing the one, and avoiding the other ? When you are tempted to fulfil a sinful lust, to gratify an unlawful passion, to commit an oppressive or ungenerous action ; does this cruel malignity of nature, impel you so forcibly one way, that you can perceive no principle, no power within you, which inclines you the contrary way ? Has it spared you no “ candle of the  
“ Lord,”



"Lord," that may shew you light in this darksome state; no checks of mind, no remorse of conscience, that may cool the heat, and restrain the violence, of this propensity to sin?

Alas for you! Your very passions would become your friends, and strenuously contend for your good, if you would govern them aright; as much as they hurt and seduce you, when you indulge them in what is wrong. Tell me, is it possible, that the same love of life, and the same fear of pain, which constantly make you shun fire and water, which constantly make you fly from poison or a pestilence; should yet have no power to make you dread the "pains of Hell," and the "flames that will never be quenched?"

Put the argument in a different light.--Has this natural corruption, this natural bar to religion, still left your Judgment free, and your Will unconfined, touching all other matters? Has it left you talents to cultivate the finest arts; to build, to plant, to raise estates, to govern kingdoms; and yet stript you of all ability to understand your duty towards your Maker, to learn his Will, to interpret his word; to feel the authority  
of

of his commands, the graces of his Spirit ?

- If, notwithstanding your pretended depravity, you still possess these fair endowments ; be assured you possess all that the wise Creator designed for you in your present life, and all that you can reasonably desire for yourselves ! It is an excellent nature, which Providence has bestowed upon you. And you have nothing wanting, towards your virtue or happiness ; but to use it well. How fully has the Prophet refuted all complaints that the Jews, or any other people could vent, against God and Nature ; by reminding them what powers they still had (if they would only exert them) for their virtuous conduct ! He “ hath shewed thee, O man, what is good. “ And what doth the Lord require of thee, “ but to do justly, to love mercy, and to “ walk humbly with thy God.”

Well: But these very scriptures often mention this inherent corruption, this antipathy and aversion in man to righteousness ! Judge of them, when you are once led into their true, undoubted meaning.

The most remarkable passages, that seemingly tend this way, or that can be wrested and perverted to do so, are of two sorts. The  
one



one sets forth the imperfection of man: the other describes the influence which habits, whether good or evil, have over him. Both are usually conveyed in highly figurative language, natural to the warm climate and volatile spirits of the Eastern people; but common enough in the dialects of all other countries, where they are not at all misunderstood.

Thus, when Job and Solomon would signify absolute innocence, or perfection, of life; they stile it cleanness. When they would point out the frailty and deficiency of human virtue, they had no middle word, no term of inferior import, but represent it by the quite opposite quality, and call it uncleanness: which only means a lower degree of purity or perfection. So Job, acknowledging himself subject to failings (from which no man is exempt in this mortal state) "What is man" says he, "that he should be clean? How can he be clean, that is born of a woman? The very heavens are not clean, in his" (God's) "sight!" That is, no man is completely innocent, nothing is immutably perfect, but God alone. And Solomon----"Who can say, I have made  
" my

“my heart clean, I am pure from my  
“sin?”

Now these texts speak not a syllable about innate, incurable corruption, but about imperfection only. They speak no more than the sense of St James, “in many things we offend all;” and of St. John, “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

Again: Other passages display the force of habits, good as well as evil, in the same exalted strain. Job avows mercy and charity to be so firmly fixed in him, as if the love of it had been born with him. “From my youth, the poor was brought up with me: I have guided the widow, from my mother’s womb.” And the Author of Ecclesiasticus --- “Wisdom was created with the faithful, in the womb.” That is, some men are so truly good, so uniformly virtuous, as if virtue were a part of their very nature.

On the other hand, David declares concerning his own repeated, customary Sins, that he practised them with such freedom, ease, and unconcern, as if he had been born a sinner. “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity: in sin did my mother conceive me.” And  
con-



concerning any such lewd men, he affirms :  
“ The wicked are estranged ” (to goodness)  
“ from the womb : they go astray as soon as  
“ they are born, speaking lies.” So Isaiah  
characterises the sinful age in which he lived  
----“ Thou wast called a transgressor from  
“ the womb.”

After the same manner St. Paul (taking  
upon himself the person of an unregenerate  
sinner) says, “ in my flesh dwelleth no good  
“ thing. I am carnal, sold under sin.”  
Every profligate man sells himself, as Ahab  
did : enslaves himself to his vices : loses all  
taste of decency and virtue.

Lastly : In this Apostle's Epistle to the  
Ephesians, the word nature unquestionably  
means nothing, but inveterate habit. “ We  
“ were by nature children of wrath, even as  
“ others.” And why ? Because, says he,  
“ We all had our conversation,” our long  
conversation, “ among them.” Now long  
use, you well know, forms a second nature.  
So it was “ nature,” as he tells the Co-  
rinthians ; that is, universal fashion and usage  
to the contrary ; which “ would make a  
“ man's wearing long hair, a public disgrace  
“ to him.”

You

You see in the foregoing, as in twenty other instances, 'How readily comparative and figurative expressions may be turned, by weak heads, or prejudiced hearts, into absurd fundamental doctrines. But to proceed.

2. What are the pretences, from the power of Satan, or the insinuations of Evil Spirits? Because these also are exprest in animated, lofty terms; to skreen yourselves from guilt, you would make them unconquerable. But behold what they will all come to, when you strip off the metaphors, and look into the simple plain truth contained under them!

Examine any trial of this sort, by which you can suppose yourself attacked. Deal with it in the same questions, I just now proposed to you, concerning your natural corruption. Lay your hand to your heart, and then say---

"Does this temptation rob me of my under-  
 "standing? Does it divest me of all free  
 "Will, or free agency? Does it blot out all  
 "my sense of propriety and duty? Or am I  
 "still left fully conscious, both what I can  
 "do, and what I ought to do? If so, be the  
 "temptation whose it may; the compliance  
 "with it, will be my own act, my own  
 "crime."

Moreover:



Moreover : How are you sure, at any time, that this or that suggestion, this or that inclination to wickedness, is the work of some infernal Spirit ? By what secret art do you distinguish it, from the operations of your own mind, or of the vices which have gained the dominion over you ? You are driven, you think, to this or that bad practice. So you may effectually be, by your own evil habits ; by your own evil desires ! Remember the Apostle's words, in the verse immediately following the text : " Every man is tempted, " when he is drawn away of his own lust."

However : Be it as you conceive. They who talk so much about one wicked Spirit, generally forget there are two other Spirits, appointed on purpose to resist that single evil one, and abundantly able to defeat all his attempts upon you ; namely, the Spirit of your own mind (unless you yourself have weakened and debauched it) supported by reason and conscience, enlightened and fortified by God's holy word, by his promises, and his threatenings ; by the best hopes, and the brightest expectations. Then, beside this, there is the Divine Spirit, the kind, all-powerful Assistant, the blessed Comforter ; who, when  
you

you have done your part, " will never suffer  
" you to be tempted above that ye are able ;  
" but will, with the temptation, make a  
" way for you to escape."

3. Take your next plea into serious consideration. The business, or the difficulties, of life, may often, I confess, put both your patience, and your integrity, to a severe proof. A fair advantage may solicit you to an unfair thing, and circumstances of fortune may press you to an unjust one. Yet, if you will but recollect, what superior motives you have, that incite you to the opposite and better side ; you will come off with victory, with unblemished virtue !

Whenever you see a prospect of unrighteous gain ; do not you see, all the while, at what immortal praise you may arrive, by being just and faithful ? Did you ever seize an opportunity of playing the knave, without knowing, that it was then in your best and happiest power, to be an honest man ? Did God ever prove you, with poverty or misfortunes ; without giving you reflection, and a conscience to tell you, that, " If you  
" would trust in Him, He would never  
" leave you, nor forsake you ;" that " Your  
" light



## S E R M O N IV.

65

“light affliction, which is but for a moment,  
“was intended to work for you a far more  
“exceeding and eternal weight of glory!”

4. The doctrine, that “God elects and re-  
“probates his rational creatures to final bliss  
“and misery; without at all regarding their  
“free virtue, or guilty behaviour;”---this, I  
say, is a doctrine, which I have found so  
frequent occasions of exposing, that I need  
here say but little about it. I will therefore  
only refer you to one principal Scripture,  
upon which it is built. St. Paul, in the ninth  
chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, con-  
fessedly, mentions certain “vessels of wrath,  
“fitted for destruction.” But Who were  
these vessels? Not particular persons. They  
were a Nation; the Jews at large. And for  
What destruction, were they fitted? The  
destruction of their temple and city, by the  
Romans;---The being cast off, from all fur-  
ther connection with God, as his peculiar  
church and people. And by Whom were they  
fitted, for this destruction? Not by Almighty  
God, but by their own repeated provocations,  
by their own inflexible infidelity.

5. One thing more, and I have done. “It  
“is possible you may be called to the hard

"trial of suffering for your conscience, or  
"even to lay down your life in defence of  
"your religion."

I am well aware what entertainment would  
be given by most people, in these modern  
days, to a discourse about the duty of mar-  
tyrdom ! However, the sacred terms of the  
Gospel cannot be altered, to suit the vague  
opinions of men. There is an everlasting  
christian maxim ; "He that for Christ's sake  
"will lose his life, shall find it" --- find it,  
restored to him, not seven fold, but infi-  
nitely more than seventy times seven fold,  
in joy and felicity. Whereas "He that  
"like a coward, will save his life, shall lose  
"it ; shall eternally lose it."

Here, then, I would only ask a single  
question. "Why are such high encomiums  
"bestowed upon the man who dies in serving  
"his king, or defending the liberties of his  
"country ; while the rudest contempt is  
"thrown upon the very mention of dying in  
"the service of that Supreme King, who  
"gave us our Being ; and for the sake of that  
"celestial country, whose liberties are no-  
"thing less than the glorious liberties of the  
"sons of God ?" And mark, I beseech you,  
the



extreme difference between the two cases ! The mightiest earthly monarch can only give his hero a little transient fame, but cannot possibly recall him one hour from the grave, or restore him to the shortest moment of life : whereas Christ will raise his faithful martyr, to immortal honour and reward !

Well ! Let us now take a summary view of the whole subject. Man was formed at first, and continues still, a rational, free, agent ; endued with faculties, which, aided by divine grace, are entirely sufficient for all the ends of his creation. At present indeed, he is but a candidate for future, superior joys ; surrounded with a variety of trials, which Providence designed should exercise his obedience, and train him up to his final perfection. He is placed in a world, liable to be corrupt, and actually corrupted. Vicious examples, and sensual pleasures, prompt him to many breaches of his duty. But then he is furnished with such ample assistances, from his own internal powers, from the instructions and commands of his Saviour, from the blessed word and spirit of God ; that all taken together, demonstrate these trials to be the result of Divine Wisdom and

Goodness towards him; and his falling by temptation, to be his own proper, personal fault.

So that hence you have in a small compass, the true origin of moral evil. 'It comes  
' not from God, or from nature; but from  
' man's criminal abuse of nature, and of na-  
' tural liberty.'

Never therefore dare to forge vain excuses for your guilt, or to "charge God foolishly;" but take with you, and keep in mind, the words of a wise man, which will bring to your remembrance all that you have heard from me upon this weighty argument.

"Say not thou, it is through the Lord, that  
"I fell away: for thou oughtest not to do  
"the things, which He hateth. Say not  
"thou, He hath caused me to err: for He  
"hath no need of the sinful man. He him-  
"self made man from the beginning, and  
"left him in the hand of his counsel. He  
"hath set before thee, fire and water: stretch  
"forth thine hand, unto whether thou wilt.  
"Before man is life and death: and which  
"he liketh best, shall be given to him."

The peace of God, &c.



# SERMON V.

MATTHEW vii. 12.

*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

**I**T is a matter of the utmost consequence in any religion, that its laws, or precepts, be not only necessary, but plain and explicit; especially, that those amongst them, which more immediately respect mens duty and salvation, be as clear to their reason, as they are needful to their happiness.

It is a still further advantage, if the rules prescribed, are short as well as easy. Brevity and perspicuity, when they meet together, render a rule complete. They assist the memory, at the same time that they inform and enlighten the understanding. They in-

cite us to practise, by affording all due helps, and cutting off all excuses.

Therefore those teachers of moral duties, ought always to be held in the highest esteem; who have the art of conveying great rules, under the fewest, most familiar, terms. And some among the Antients are justly admired upon this very account, that almost every line is a discourse, almost every word a sentence. The scripture morals want no perfection of human wisdom; but appear, in many points, far superior to it: And Solomon is allowed on all hands to possess this talent, beyond all that ever taught at Athens or Rome.

The precept in the text, "of doing as we would be done by" as here stated by our blessed Saviour, will abundantly verify the foregoing observations. It has every character abovementioned; is short, level to all apprehensions, of universal importance and obligation.

In this light then, I purpose to consider it; and shall remark,

I. Its nature, meaning, and proper limits.

II. Its peculiar excellent qualities, when rightly and honestly interpreted.

III. The



III. The indispensable necessity of our carefully obeying it.

And, I. As to the nature, meaning, and limits of this grand duty. Some men are so subtle, so disingenuous; that they will labour to puzzle and perplex the most simple truths; to put obscure constructions, upon the brightest maxims. Remember therefore, that when our Lord says, "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them;" it cannot signify, that "Whatever a man may, at any time, or in any case, wish for, or have assurance enough to request, at the hands of another; that this, I say, must be the Rule, either for that man's dealing with him, or a Rule to himself in dealing with others." No! We are vastly too partial, in what concerns ourselves. If our own private wishes, or selfish affections, were made the standard of our actions; there would very often be much injustice done, and an infinite deal of kindness would be wretchedly bestowed!

Therefore the true design of the noble rule before us, is this; that "Every man should consider the merits, weigh the real circumstances, state the full right of the case, with

‘ his neighbour ; and then, putting himself  
 ‘ into his neighbour’s place, ask himself what  
 ‘ he might fairly expect, or hope to have done  
 ‘ for him, in such a situation.’

Take a few examples. A guilty criminal would undoubtedly be glad, to have his judge acquit him, both of his crime and his punishment. But if this man would suppose himself the judge, and the judge the criminal ; and thereby set before his eyes the malignity of the crime ; the mischief done to the party injured, to his country ; the absolute fitness and necessity of punishment ; he would then see himself in quite a new light : he would then own that for him justice were better, than what he ere while thought to be mercy.

After the same manner, a debtor may possibly wish, that his creditor would freely forgive him his debt. But upon changing fides, and finding the creditor no way beholden to him ; nay, really unable to give away such a sum ; he would acknowledge that his very desire of being released from the debt, was not “ doing as he would be done by.”

Again, the sottish spendthrift, and the lazy healthy beggar (the worst man upon earth, except a notorious criminal) is craving  
 to



to be raised and relieved by any body and every body. But let him throw off the vagabond, and put on a better character: and he will confess, that instead of alms, he ought to have stripes; that to do him justice, would be, not to give him meat for his belly, but a whip for his back.

Once more; though we all love to receive kindnesses, yet whoever should ask a favour, that could not be granted without distressing and hurting his friend, would indisputably violate the laws of all sincere friendship.

These and many such instances, will easily shew you the proper bounds of this christian duty; ---namely, that 'We must require from other men, and always practise towards them, not what a corrupt notion of our own interest, not what a wild imagination, may prompt us to wish were done; but what appears, upon maturely considering the connection and relation between us, laudable and honourable, equitable and reasonable, to be done.

On the other hand; when we are commanded, to "Love our neighbour as ourselves;" the meaning is not, that 'We must put the welfare of every man, upon an exact

nicknack level with our own; which is impossible in nature; but that "We should be as willing to do what is just and generous by every man, as we are ready to expect the same from Him."

And when you thus understand the Rule, you will find it a golden one indeed! a guide, that will conduct you safe through all your dealings; teach you to behave with propriety and integrity, in every situation of life; keep you innocent and virtuous, in your whole intercourse, your whole conversation, with mankind.

To prevent another mistake: when our blessed Master tells us here, that "Doing as we would be done by, is the law and the prophets;" we cannot imagine Him to assert, that "this single precept is the sum total of religion;" but only, that "it comprehends the whole second table of the law; or that part of religious duty, which we owe to our neighbour." And so St. Paul rightly explains it, in his Epistle to the Romans; where he calls it "Love, the fulfilling of the law." For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, and if there be any other commandment,



“mandment, it is briefly comprehended in  
“this saying---Thou shalt love thy neigh-  
“bour as thyself.”

Indeed the first table of the law, contain-  
ing our regards and duty to God, is insepa-  
rably united with the second. For the doing  
what is fair or friendly towards men, without  
any respect to the divine authority, may, if  
if you please, be called good-nature, but can-  
not possibly be deemed religion; which sup-  
poses a sense and reverence of God upon the  
mind.

In the twenty-second chapter of this  
Gospel, our Lord expresses himself more  
fully; so as to leave less room, for any mis-  
construction: “On these two command-  
“ments” (the love of God, and of our neigh-  
bour) “depend all the law and the prophets.”  
Yet there is still a third commandment;  
namely, sobriety to ourselves; which, though  
not directly mentioned, is most certainly in-  
tended and implied in Both the former. For  
no mortal can discharge his duty, either to  
God or man, who has no thought of duty  
towards Himself. Nor can intemperate lusts,  
and vicious inclinations, possibly be indulged;  
but by sacrificing the innocence, or the  
property,

property, of others. So that all sin against ourselves, is a crime, both against our neighbour, and against Him that created us.

Thus much, then, concerning the scope, or limits, of our Saviour's precept; which teaches us to make our own reasonable desires, the measure of our behaviour to other men.

II. I must now, as the Second Thing proposed, lay before you its peculiar excellence and importance. Which I shall consider, 1st, with regard to our external conduct; 2dly, to our sentiments, or opinions, of each other.

1st, then: Let us observe, what a large and comprehensive, what a perfect and unerring law of action, we here have, in the concise terms imaginable. Inasmuch, that there is not an instance, throughout the whole compass of life; not a post, nor an office, nor a station, can be named; but where This will shine, "a lamp to your feet, a light to your paths."

Some are exalted to princely dignity: some abound in wealth, while others are dependent, or oppressed by fortune. Some are placed in authority, others under command. Some are blest with superior abilities and knowledge: many



many more are formed with moderate or weak understandings. In short, mens conditions, as well as characters, are so various; that neither a few words, nor a few pages, would serve to describe, or even to enumerate them. But it will secure your passage equally through them all, to remember, with attention, and an upright conscience, the principle of "doing as you would be done by."

If the man of eminence wants information, how he should behave to those beneath him; let him descend awhile from his throne, and rank himself with the men, who receive the law from his mouth; who must be rendered happy or miserable, by his use or abuse of his dominion. Will he not immediately picture to himself, what a curse upon mankind is tyranny and oppression; how lovely, above all blessings, is power, directed by equity, and accompanied with condescension?

Exactly so a subject, who is petulant and froward, or prone to envy the grandeur of his Superiors; may soon see his error, and learn a better lesson, by only turning the tables: by only supposing himself the prince or the magistrate, and viewing the charge,  
the

the importance, the cares, of governing. And could he then do otherwise, than confess a clear obligation, that he should render to "all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour?"

Following the same plain road of conscience (for conscience is the plainest road in the world) let but the hard, unfeeling master, and the negligent, deceitful servant, exchange places for a while. And then let the one say, whether it is not a sin, as well as a shame, to enjoy a man's labour, without paying him just wages; without giving him his meat in due season: and the other, must he not blush at the thought of being fed and supported by the very man, to whom he shews himself a base, a faithless, steward!

To mention no more, among numberless articles. People in trade, have nothing of greater consequence, than to make the case and circumstances of the persons, whom they deal or contend with, their own. Here indeed some things may be more nice, more intricate, and difficult to decide. But yet, wherever our blessed Master's rule were duly regarded; the difficulties would lessen, and presently vanish.



vanish. So that there would be but little employment for a certain Profession, whose art and study it too often is, to throw darkness upon clear cases, to inflame mens passions under pretence of defending their rights, and by forms of law to confound all right, equity, and property.

Thus far we have seen what the text injoins, with reference to our external actions. Let me now, 2dly, consider it, as alike regulating our very thoughts and sentiments of each other. For it extends to the mind. It influences the inward, as well as the outward conduct.

The all-wise God, who framed the human faculties, with all the various circumstances which may occasion different effects from the exercise of them in different men; HE, I say, plainly foresaw, that not only the affairs of common life, but even religion itself, would inevitably be liable to some disputes and oppositions. He knew it impossible, that men should all agree, should perfectly accord, either in this or any other matter. But, to prevent the evils that might hence arise, He has given us a never-failing maxim, which equally includes and obliges us all. This maxim is,

“ To

“ To think, as we desire to be thought of;  
 “ as well as to do, as we would be done by;”

--- To have charity in the heart within, as  
 ‘ well as justice in mere outward action.’

The expediency of which maxim is so very evident, that no man could ever be severe in his censures upon another, who would only reflect, what candour and tenderness he himself would wish to meet with, were he in the place of the person whom he condemns.

Suppose, for instance, it had been your lot (and whose lot might it not have been) to live under a particular government, in a particular neighbourhood or family, where the manner of your education, the turn of your conversation, the whole train in short of notions in your mind, had made it impossible for you to embrace certain popular doctrines, or prevailing points, of religion.

Tell me now, in such a case, whether you could think yourself treated with any moral equity, or civil justice, or religious temper, if the principles which you esteem sacred (and which are no way injurious to the community) should be judged unchristian, impious, heretical! Especially, if your pocket and your person, your liberty and  
 estate,



estate, as well as your character, should be forced to pay for your conscience ! If, in fine, you should be pronounced worthy of eternal damnation in the next world, though you had done your best to serve your Maker in the present one ! Would you not urge your strongest plea for charity, towards every thing, but open licentiousness ? Would you not insist upon having your heart left to God, who alone is able to discern it ?

Here then is your golden rule : “ go  
“ and do thou likewise.” Harbour no uncharitable thoughts, about other mens spiritual condition. Never presume to read, what they have within them : nor ever rashly say of them, what shall befall them hereafter. Pronounce no man wicked, till his deeds and his life demonstrate him such : nay, even then, forbear your reproaches, as much as you can : make every favourable allowance, the case will admit. “ He who judges hastily,  
‘ or without mercy, is as arrant an oppressor  
‘ and a tyrant in opinion, as others may be  
‘ in practise.”

Thus have I set before you a noble, and a most extensive duty : but one, that is not more extensive, than it is plain and easy in

every particular. It suits all faculties, lies within the reach of every capacity. Few could be ignorant, what is fair and equitable; if they would only attend to it. Every man has understanding enough, if he had but honesty enough, to know himself; to state his own just interest; to set a price upon his own reputation. And hence appears the singular guilt, of transgressing so manifest a duty; and what an unpardonable violation of conscience there is, in all knavery, in all selfish cruelty! Hence also you see the reason, why it is so difficult, to enforce the observance of this golden precept. Many, too many, are loath to put themselves into their neighbour's place. The man of wealth and luxury, abhors whatever looks, or sounds, like poverty. The great and the proud, detest the very idea of a servile or dependent condition. The extravagant rake never thinks about thing, but is determined at all events to gratify his passions; and can even make a jest of the injury he is doing, to his relations, to his creditors, to the public. All such people as these, are wilfully blind. They will not open their eyes, nor behold the blessed light, that would

show



shew them their obligation, to live and act like rational Beings.

III. After what has passed, you cannot, I am sure, want a formal argument, to prove that you should obey this universal law of morals. Be pleased only to consider the affair, in this striking view. If any one man assumes a licence, to do what is inhuman and iniquitous; he must allow that every other man has an equal right (pardon the absurdity of calling it a right) to the same horrid privilege with himself. Suppose then, we all had, and actually used, such a licence: ---what a scene, what an habitation, must this world be! In comparison with such a state, the most lonely wilderness would be a paradise; the "hole of a rock," a palace. Friends, there could be none: and neighbours would be nothing, but a nuisance, a terror, to one another. So that even the mightiest of these villains, would soon be reduced to his last prayers; would wish he "had wings like a dove, that he might flee away, and be at rest."

Indeed a community of men, all perfect strangers to honest principles, or at least to honest practises, is a contradic-

tion in terms. Mutual justice, and a mutual exchange of good offices, are the very basis, upon which society is built; without some degree of which it can no more subsist, than a house can stand without the least foundation; or an animal body live, without the assistance and concurrence of its several members.

The more generally these social virtues are cultivated, the happier mankind must necessarily be: and from the neglect of them proceed the numerous evils, we every day occasion to ourselves, as well as those about us. Such evils inseparably attend all unjust, unrighteous dealing. For the laws of God are the laws of our nature, formed for our benefit, and written upon our hearts in most legible characters. He has placed us together here, that, by observing these essential rules, we might promote each others welfare. What then is every wicked man doing, but destroying the very ends for which he was created, the very purposes for which the world was made? And, if God had not repeatedly told us so; it is self-evident, that "Such a man cannot possibly enter into the kingdom of heaven." How can He possibly be  
qualified



qualified to "inherit a kingdom of righteousness truth and peace, which will continue "for ever ;" who, for a short life of a few years, could never be induced to "follow "peace with all men," to "speak the truth "from his heart," or to "do as he would be "done by?"

To God, only wise--

published in a volume of the same title, which will contain  
a full and complete list of the names of the persons who  
have been elected to the office of Mayor of the City of New York  
for the year 1890. The names of the persons who have been  
elected to the office of Mayor of the City of New York for the  
year 1890 are as follows:

To be only with...

The names of the persons who have been elected to the office of Mayor of the City of New York for the year 1890 are as follows:

1. John A. B. ...

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## S E R M O N VI.

JOHN X. 14.

*I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and  
am known of mine.*

**I**N the first ages of the world, before wealth and pleasure had corrupted the minds, or stained the innocence of mankind; before pernicious schemes were invented, to pamper the pride and luxury of human life; mens affairs consisted in a few, and those the most simple, yet most useful, employments: in tilling the ground, and cultivating its pure, wholesome fruits; in the management of cattle, and the arts of husbandry. In these lay all the knowledge, as well as riches, of our plain, honest forefathers.

The word Shepherd therefore, in early times, had an acceptation, far above that mean one, to which it is now reduced; and

conveyed a far more honourable idea. Even Noah was but an husbandman : and those eminent Worthies, Abraham and Jacob, Lot and Laban, were graced with no higher title, than that of shepherds.

Moreover as the business of shepherds with their flocks, manifestly resembles the duty of princes towards their subjects ; therefore, by a natural, easy figure, the term shepherd was applied in common, both to the feeders of cattle, and to the rulers of men. Whence, as the Learned have observed, some antient languages expressed the offices of King and Shepherd, by the same word.

This remark will let you into the sense and spirit of this phrase, so often used in scripture : where we find the Emperor Cyrus called God's Shepherd, and David said to feed, that is to govern, his people ; nay, even Almighty God himself addressed, as the Shepherd of Israel : under which metaphor you may with great pleasure read the most lively descriptions of Him, as the supreme Guide and Guardian of the Jewish nation, in the psalms and the prophets. " Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel," says the Psalmist, " thou that leadeest Joseph like a flock." And the prophet Ezekiel--  
" Thus



“ Thus saith the Lord God ; I will both  
“ search my sheep, and seek them out, as a  
“ shepherd seeketh out his flock---I will  
“ feed them upon the mountains of Israel,  
“ by the rivers---I will feed them in good  
“ pasture---I will feed them with judgment  
“ ---I will save my flock---I will set up one  
“ shepherd over them, even my servant Da-  
“ vid : he shall feed them, and shall be their  
“ shepherd.”

This same remark will likewise shew you the force and propriety of those prophetic expressions in the Old Testament, where Christ, the Messiah, is pointed out as a Shepherd over God's people; and of those which our Saviour himself uses, when He represents his care and government of his Church under the same image ; when He sets forth the tempers and dispositions, the manners and qualifications, of his disciples, by the emblem of his Sheep. This not only He but his Apostles do, in several places throughout the New Testament ; particularly in this chapter of St. John, from which the Text is taken : “ I am the good  
“ shepherd, and know my sheep, and am  
“ known of mine.”

In discoursing further upon these words, I shall,

I. Lay

I. Lay before you the peculiar blessings which attend the government, or religion, of Christ, as the Lord and Saviour of christian people; and which are here suggested to us, by his title of the "good shepherd."

II. I shall inquire what temper of mind, what conduct and behaviour, is necessary to qualify us for these blessings, or to denominate us his faithful subjects; as implied in the phrases of our "being his sheep," "knowing Him," and "being known by Him."

I. The character of a good shepherd, is plainly designed to represent Christ, as a gracious master and protector; whose dominion over us, has all those conditions and qualities, that are amiable in themselves, or that can be desirable towards our well-being.

And 1<sup>st</sup>. His government is endeared to us by this consideration, that we are strictly his own: "whose own the sheep are," as He himself here expresses it; in opposition to hired, or deputy, shepherds: meaning, that we are under his own immediate eye and direction.

A charge, undertaken at second hand, may sometimes indeed be tolerably well conducted, from motives of interest, or of reputation; but is frequently found, not to be attended  
with



with a concern that reaches so deep. Such a trust will be neglected, for a variety of idle pleasures; and cannot stand the shock of much trouble, or danger. It is right, possession, property, in any things; that renders our care of them, active, vigorous, and lasting. Few servant shepherds are so conscientious, or so vigilant, as Jacob, in the book of Genesis; "who brought nothing to his master, that was torn by beasts; but bore the loss of it himself." Under whose management, the ewes never cast their young; nothing was stolen, by day, or by night: whose strength was consumed in the day-time by drought, and by the frost in the night: and whose sleep departed from his eyes."

This signal advantage then we have, as subjects of the Messiah's kingdom. He commits our final safety to no vicegerents, whose own we are not. He has subjected our faith to no fallible, imperious decisions of human guides; nor made our future doom to depend upon the blessings, or cursings, of any mortal man. The bread He feeds us with, is his holy Word; even the sure word of life. The precepts, promises, and threatnings, He has given us, are all contained in that word.

And

And though the ministry of men may doubtless be useful, in helping us to understand those divine laws; yet They only are the rule, the standard, to which we must refer, and by which we shall rise or fall. St. Paul you know tells us, that we are not even our own: "for ye are bought," says he, "with a price"---with the price of the precious blood of Christ. And as this lays us under the strongest obligations, to love and obey so gracious a Redeemer; so is it matter of unspeakable comfort, that He is our only owner and master; that to his dictates we have constant freedom of appeal; that his mouth alone can pronounce the sentence, which will determine our spiritual, eternal condition.

2, Another light wherein our Saviour appears, under the resemblance of the good shepherd, respects the nature of his laws, the wisdom and mercy of his government over us.

Of all the relations in which an intelligent Being can be placed, authority or command over others, is the nicest and the highest; requiring his utmost sagacity, caution, and integrity: because, in such a station, he is most intimately concerned with the various interests and humours of the governed, as well

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as



as with the preservation of his own honour. Therefore despotic and arbitrary power, is the worst, the most dangerous kind of it, among such frail, passionate creatures, as we are. Absolute monarchy, in the hands of men, has almost always been found a most disagreeable, desperate thing. But, wherever it is joined with perfect wisdom and benevolence; there, the more unlimited the power, the more blessed and adoreable does it become to those, who live under its influence.

This is the very case with us, and the great "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." In Him are "all the treasures, not only of "wisdom and knowledge;" but of goodness likewise, answering to that knowledge. His commands are the laws of Heaven; formed for the benefit of the subject, not merely to display the authority of the Lawgiver. They are all adapted to our nature; are productive of those valuable qualifications in us, which advance our present felicity, and can alone secure our future one.

That He might induce us to observe these laws, and give us spirit in the whole discharge of our duty; He has annexed to them rewards and penalties, the most interesting and engaging.

gaging. There is not an instance of any virtue that adorns the human mind, wanting in his Gospel; nor a motive to practise it, forgotten in his religion. The very restraints He has laid upon us, are really favours: the very punishments He has denounced, terminate in good to the whole flock.

When David had assured himself, that "God was his Shepherd;" his conclusion could not but be as certain, as it was delightful: "therefore," says he, "I shall lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert" (or refresh) "my soul, and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness." How justly may we Christians apply these joyful words to ourselves; to the inseparable connection which our Saviour has established, between our duty and our happiness! When He instructs us in christian righteousness; He feeds us in pastures, that are truly refreshing to reasonable minds: When He assists us, by his divine grace, to attain that righteousness; He truly leads us to the waters of comfort.

Here let me add the lenity and indulgence, so visible throughout this heavenly government



ment of Christ;---in the encouragements He has given to the weak, if honest endeavours, of the meanest subject; in the tender allowances He has made, for the several infirmities or disadvantages, for the want of knowledge or abilities, in every person. No more is imposed upon any, than he is able to bear: no more is required from any, than the improvement of what has been given him. Nay, and when we are "gone out of the way;" we are to be received again, upon the just, the equitable terms, of true repentance: even after we have sinned, if we will return to our duty, He himself is our "Advocate with the Father;" He himself is the "Propitiation for our sins."

Thus has this blessed Master fulfilled the descriptions given of Him, under the similitude of the good Shepherd, by the antient prophets. "He shall feed his flock," says Isaiah, "like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." So Ezekiel---"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away. I will bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick."

3. But

3. But one thing more needs to be observed, for completing your idea of Christ, as our King and Shepherd. Which is, what He himself has mentioned, as the finishing part of this his character: "The good shepherd," says He, "lays down his life for the sheep."

In this, the foregoing, and following verses, our Saviour had an eye to those countries, which abounded with wild beasts, or were inhabited by barbarous people who lived upon spoil and robbery. On which account, strength and valour, as well as diligence and fidelity, became necessary qualifications of a good shepherd. The flock must not only be duly fed and watered, but be guarded and defended, sometimes at the hazard of the keeper's life.

In this figure then is represented, though but faintly, that unexampled resolution of goodness and love, which brought down the Son of God from heaven, to give up his life a ransom for us men. Men will sometimes indeed, venture and suffer a great deal for each other, upon various principles. Some, from a generous friendship; some, in hope of present fame; many with an ultimate view to their own profit, with a prospect of advantage,

or



or reward. But in the Death of our heavenly Shepherd, there could be no possible inducement, save that of pure compassion and mercy. The greatest love which man can shew, is, to "lay down his life for his friend:" but all such goodness was far surpassed, when, while "we were yet enemies, Christ died for us!"

This therefore it is, that discovers the peculiar blessing of our Lord's dominion over us. Whenever a people are governed by a power of mere conquest, how uncertain, how precarious, are all their enjoyments, rights and privileges! How do they dread the laws, suspect every proceeding, even the softest promises and favours, of such a potentate! How blest then, beyond expression, are the subjects of this celestial King! who rules them for no other reason, but because He loves them; who has gained them, and made them his own, only by his kindness to them, by suffering and dying for them!

I shall conclude the present head, with that warm and affectionate argument of St Paul: "He that spared not his own Son, but gave Him up for us all; how shall not He with Him also freely give us all things!"

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II. Having made these short observations upon the character which our Supreme Master here assumes, as proper to set forth the nature of his spiritual government ; let me now consider the principal qualities, necessary to denominate men his true disciples ; signified here, by their being stiled his Sheep. Which implies, 1, a tractable temper ; an honest impartial desire to learn the Will of God, in order that we may serve and obey Him.

It is a common remark, that the Sheep is one of the most docile creatures, the most easy to be managed and governed. In the Eastern countries especially, and in those times when the feeding of cattle was so material an employment; they are described as understanding the different signs and voices of their keepers, with wonderful exactness. To which our Saviour often alludes, in this chapter, particularly in the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses; where He says, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me;" meaning thus---that 'Men of upright minds, would certainly receive his doctrine, and would certainly make a progress in it, proportioned to their several capacities.' On the contrary, He tells the Jews, that "They



“believed Him not, because they were not of  
“his sheep;” that is, because they were of  
quite another cast; prejudiced, stubborn,  
sensual, worldly-minded. Those therefore,  
even among the Heathens, who were morally  
good men, He, in this chapter, accepts and  
acknowledges as his sheep. “Other sheep I  
“have, which are not of this fold: them also  
“I must bring, and they shall hear my voice.”

In general then you see what it is, that can  
either qualify a man for embracing Christ’s  
religion at all; or can make him worthy of  
its honours, and entitle him to its blessings,  
after he has embraced it: namely, ‘a teach-  
‘able disposition, a frank ingenuous heart;  
‘open to conviction; willing to follow the  
‘light of truth, to improve himself in the  
‘knowledge and practice of his duty.’

2. Another quality recommended to us un-  
der this emblem, as an essential ingredient in  
the composition of a Christian, is an humble,  
inoffensive, and charitable behaviour.

Learned men have observed that, in the  
Eastern tongues, the same word, which stands  
for a Sheep, denotes also its natural temper;  
and points out that innocence, submission,  
and sweetness, by which this animal attracts

the love of mankind, almost beyond any other. It is a creature, that looks upon all about it, without malice, or ill design ; offers no attacks, but is patient, and forgetful of injuries from other beasts ; makes little or no defence ; meditates no revenge ; beholds the shearer, without anger ; and parts even from its life, with but small resistance.

Nothing can be a more pleasing image of that good-nature, simplicity, and sincerity, in all our conversation ; which are the great comfort and blessing of society. No figure can more fully comprehend those divine christian precepts, which command us to be  
“ harmless and blameless, as the sons of God ;  
“ not to go beyond, or defraud our brother  
“ in any matter ; to bless them who curse us ;  
“ to pray for them who persecute us ;” to love one another with that affection and charity, by which “ all men shall know that  
“ we are Christ’s disciples”---with an affection, that scorns all artifice, or hypocrisy ; with a charity, that will incline us to judge favourably, to hope the best in all cases ; especially in all cases of Controversy that may happen between us and our fellow-christians, whether about religious or secular concerns.

For



For the single purpose of Christianity is, to promote universal harmony. It supposes that its doctrines will be offered to men, various in their apprehensions and conceptions. It takes for granted, that hence there will necessarily arise a diversity of opinions amongst its members. But it kindly provides against every evil consequence, by directing us to unite in those essential points, which we all clearly understand; and to compound with each other for all inferior matters, by this sovereign law of charity.

Some antient countries, we are told, esteemed the Sheep, as the most acceptable of all Sacrifices; not for its size or costliness, but for the peculiar gentleness of its nature, which was thought to represent that humility and serenity of mind, wherewith it becomes mankind to worship the Deity. And certainly, without this, no sacrifice can be grateful, no oblation can be pure, in his eyes. When our passions are fierce and turbulent; our sentiments envious, or full of resentment; they suppress and smother all the incense we can offer. But when the soul is filled with humanity to its fellow-creatures, its prayers ascend in brightest flame, and are carried uninterruptedly towards Heaven.

The Application of what has been said upon this subject, shall be comprised in the two following short articles.

1. If such is the nature of Christ's government over us, as above described; it infinitely concerns all those, who are pastors of his church, so to employ their commission from Him, as to attain the true ends of this his government.

They therefore are the good shepherds of his flock, who deal by the sheep, as their Lord Himself has done. Who lead them to wholesome pastures; who give them the water of his original spring, genuine and uncorrupt, as far as human abilities can discern and dispense it. They, in fine, who teach the same "undefiled religion," which He taught; who "build men up in that holy faith, which He himself delivered to the Saints;" above all, who conscientiously enforce the great practical Duties of his Gospel: By "putting the Brethren in remembrance of which, they will be faithful Ministers of Christ;" and "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

2. If



2. If under this familiar image, our divine Instructor points out the temper and behaviour of his most approved disciples; hence you will easily perceive, 'What it is to be a Christian.' Let as many of us therefore, as profess themselves such, give all diligence to deserve that excellent character. Let us study to live in universal peace, by a friendly treatment of all sects and parties; to prevent the evils that attend religious and all other differences, by a spirit of moderation and candor; to put away enmity and malice, by mutual forbearance, and forgiveness of each other. For if we do these things, we shall then be indeed the "children of God," the "sheep" and true disciples of Christ." We shall then "know Him, and follow Him, and hear his voice." We shall then likewise "be known of Him;" that is, be acknowledged, be accepted, by Him; and find that rest to our souls, which will be the sure portion of all those, who "learn from Him to be meek and lowly in heart."

To Whom be honour and glory for ever!

THE REMOVAL

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...that excellent character ...  
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...and true disciples of Christ ...  
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...those who ...  
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To Whom be honour and glory for ever  
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THE REMOVAL



# S E R M O N VII.

HEBREWS X. 25.

*Not for saking the assembling of ourselves together,  
as the manner of some is; but exhorting one  
another.*

**T**HOUGH nothing is so conducive as  
religion, to the real happiness of man-  
kind; yet nothing, generally speaking, is  
either less understood, or less regarded. We  
usually see men applying themselves to the  
business of common life, with competent  
skill, activity, and prudence; employing  
such means, as are proper to gain their  
ends; and taking care to be versed in all the  
arts of worldly wisdom. But as for religion,  
the rule that should guide the moral life;  
how different is their behaviour! Many of us  
are easily imposed upon, in the plainest truths:

or

or content themselves with a bare outside shew of godliness : or spend their zeal about matters of the smallest moment ; labouring to be saved by any thing, rather than the pains of being truly good. While others go so far into the opposite extreme, that they throw off all appearance of religion ; and refuse to give it any external countenance : as if it were an affair of no consequence, or injurious some way to mens natural rights.

This latter however, was not quite the case with those persons, the Author of this Epistle here accuses. They probably “ forsook the “ assembling” with their fellow-christians, not from a thoughtless disregard of the duty itself, but from fear of persecution and suffering for conscience sake. The times were then very hard : and the owning himself a Christian, might expose a man to the hazard of forfeiting his liberty, or even his life.

Yet no difficulties the Gospel encountered in those early ages, were a sufficient excuse for renouncing the profession of it. The Apostles, we find, would not allow them as an excuse ; and required a strict attendance upon the religious meetings, under every disadvantage. So that there were but “ some” (perhaps but few)



few) whom St. Paul had occasion to censure for this neglect. The Christians assembled as often as possible, in the severest times: and whoever would not chearfully undergo any temporal inconvenience, rather than desert his Master's cause, was very justly thought unworthy to be called a disciple.

You cannot, I am sure, forbear reflecting, how widely different is the conduct of Christians, in this present age and country; where such numbers forsake the service of their Maker, while it is not only incumbent upon them from all the arguments of reason and Scripture, but is solemnly enjoined by the civil powers, by the laws of our constitution, by the authority of our governors!---In what follows, I shall,

I. Consider the expediency of prayer at large, and the peculiar advantages of public worship.

II. I shall endeavour to answer the several pleas, that are generally offered by such as absent from it

I, then. Prayer is that address to Almighty God, wherein we acknowledge our dependence upon Him; wherein we express our sense of his goodness and power, by which

we

we not only were created, but are continually preserved and supported. In divine worship, we confess the Deity to be the giver of all good; and request from Him such a measure of it, as our condition may require, or his Wisdom shall see most convenient for us. We profess our obligations to love and adore Him, for all his mercies towards us; our hearty sorrow, for the transgressions we have committed against Him; our sincere resolution, to amend our lives, and obey his righteous laws.

This is a duty, arising not merely from the positive command of the Deity himself, but from our nature, and His nature; from the unchangeable relation, which the one bears to the other. And it would have been an indispensable duty, though God had never revealed his Will, or the Scriptures had never spoken a syllable about it. To worship the supreme free Cause of your existence; to beg for blessings, of which you feel yourselves in need; to return thanks for those you have already received; to ask forgiveness of sins, you know yourselves chargeable with;----these are, surely, the plainest dictates of an intelligent and ingenuous mind! To do nothing like this, is the ignorant impudence of Atheism!

It



It is declaring ourselves dependent upon no Superior, but completely sufficient for our own happiness; subject to no rule of morals, but at full liberty to act in what manner we please. Whereas every day's experience, every occurrence of our lives, demonstrates how weak and helpless we are; how unable, by our own mere foresight or power, to provide for ourselves; how incessantly we are beholden to the universal Benefactor, for whatever we enjoy here, or can hope for hereafter; that consequently we are bound by the strongest ties of interest as well as duty, to avoid whatever is criminal, or offensive in his sight. And what is so, every man's conscience abundantly informs him; clearly pointing out the essential difference between good and evil, between actions which become, and those which disgrace, a rational creature; telling him that the one cannot but be agreeable, the other repugnant, to the Will of the Creator, which is the purest, the most perfect reason.

Prayer, accordingly, is so evident a duty, that it has always been looked upon as a capital branch of religion. All nations have concurred in paying this divine honour, to the several Gods they acknowledged. Gratitude.

to

to those, whom they imagined to be the Authors of their Being and happiness; is a lesson, which Nature has ever taught men from the beginning. And though the Heathens were indeed grossly mistaken, about the Object of their devotion; yet they manifestly saw, they could not help seeing, that the Devotion itself was highly proper and necessary. The common consent of mankind, respecting this grand point, is alone a sufficient argument in its behalf; and shews it to result from their primitive, most simple, conceptions of things.

But, as Christians, our obligations to this duty, stand forth in a still superior light. We have it recommended to us, by the precepts, by the whole life, of our blessed Master; whose piety was as eminent, as all his other virtues. It is enjoined in every page, throughout the writings of his Apostles; who themselves prayed continually. Special promises are annexed, in the Scriptures, to a due observance of it. These Scriptures assure us, that God is ready to grant every petition, consistent with our true happiness, and the measures of his own government; that, if we desire his blessings, we have nothing to do, but to take care to deserve them. "Ask,"

says



# S E R M O N VII. 111

says our Lord, "and ye shall receive: seek, and ye shall find."

But though the Scriptures do thus in general enforce this duty, yet they tie us down to no particular mode or manner of exercising it. The circumstances of time, place, and the like, as the case stood when the Books of the New Testament were written, could not be reduced under any fixed rule: and indeed it is a matter of human prudence, to regulate these things. Prayer may be either private or public. The former more immediately relates to a man's self: the latter has respect to all about us, as we are a body of christian people. The great end of Both, is the same; To cultivate in the mind such a reverence of God, such devout sentiments concerning Him, as will make us serve Him faithfully, and keep his commandments.

The private worshipper performs this duty for his own sake, for preserving his own heart in constant good frame and temper. But public devotion is pointed at, and has its good effect upon, others. It is a social duty; designed to diffuse a sense of religion, among a people at large: which cannot possibly be done, without some popular, outward profession

session of it. A religious community, like every other community, must be supported, not by the secret wishes, but by the joint and open assistance, of all who belong to it. They "exhort," they animate one another, by conspiring in the same acts of devotion, by publicly professing the same faith, by declaring the same hope in the same God and Saviour of them all.

If you will give yourselves the trouble to consider this subject, you will soon perceive, that the bulk of mankind would inevitably lose what few notions they have about religion, were they once debarred from assembling together, from being influenced by the presence and example of their Superiors. The man that holds the plough, and labours for his daily bread, can enter but little into the reasons, upon which the Gospel is founded. He judges about it entirely from the behaviour of those, whom he supposes to be wiser and more knowing than himself. A good example therefore has greater weight with him, than ten thousand arguments, where this is wanting. The seeing such examples of goodness and piety, does infinitely more service to real Christianity, than all the other means



means that were ever devised for the propagation of it.

There never did in fact any thing like religion, subsist upon earth; without some general meetings of the people who professed it. The Heathens had certain times of coming together, to offer sacrifice, and to address the Gods after their manner. Under the Jewish Law, every seventh day was set apart, for religious purposes, by the special command of God himself. The same custom, with a change only of the day, has obtained among Christians, through all ages. The enemies of Revelation, in its infant state, were bent, if possible, on suppressing these assemblies: well convinced that, could they but disunite the men; the religion would presently fall away, and sink to nothing. The Christians, however, were not easily terrified by these persecutions. They foresaw the same destructive consequence, and remembered the injunctions, which the Apostles had laid upon them. Therefore they held together, and kept up their society with amazing resolution, even in times of the utmost danger.

The whole, then, lies here---Public worship is the only thing, that can maintain a  
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public regard to the Christian Faith, which, without it, would be almost instantly lost. This would be to lose the greatest blessing, mankind ever yet enjoyed; and must, in the opinion of all wise men, be the most fatal loss they could sustain. For Christianity has discovered to us the most important truths. It has instructed us in the nature of God, in every part of our duty to Him, and to each other. It has enlarged our minds, and extended our views. It has laid open the designs of Providence towards us, informed us, by Whom and for what ends we were made; above all, how we may be happy, both here and for ever. These are the noble gifts of religious light, wherewith Christ has blest his Church: and, if the "Gates of Hell" could possibly prevail against it; it would immediately relapse into that dark superstition, which so universally reigned before his Appearance, which as universally reigns over those parts of the earth that have not yet received his Gospel.

II. The duty before us, being thus established; Let me now inquire, what are the Excuses, usually offered by those who transgress it.

1. Some

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11. 2. Some



1. Some alledge, that "They can serve God in their own houses, and can edify themselves at home."----Very few, I am afraid, who thus openly affront the religion of their country, pray much in private. But suppose they do : That will be no sufficient plea. For there are many advantages, which society receives from public worship ; which cannot be received without it ; and which every member of society, is indisputably bound to promote. Indeed, as far as a man's self only is concerned ; private devotion may fully answer all good purposes. And if each man would consecrate a due portion of his time, to prayer and other religious exercises ; there would certainly be less occasion, for any common, united service. But alas ! considering our remissness in matters of this nature, that must never be expected. Many peoples lives, you see, are a mere round of dissipation and diversion : while others find it difficult to struggle through the world, and have their time as well as thoughts wholly engaged in procuring a poor livelihood. All persons under such circumstances, were they not, at some stated seasons, called away from these vain, or servile occupations,

would be strangers to the face, to the very name, of Religion.

Need I mention what multitudes, among all the inferior ranks of men, know not how to pray by themselves; being so slenderly acquainted with their own language, that they are utterly unable to compose prayers for their own use, or at all to worship God in private. The single thing such people can do, is 'To come together at a time and place appointed; where they may have suitable prayers provided for them, and be guided in their devotion.' So that the retired worshipper consults only his own personal benefit, and acts the merely selfish part: he forgets the encouragement he should give to his weaker brethren: he overlooks the social part of his Christianity.

What I here say, is by no means intended to discountenance private prayer, considered in itself, and rightly used: but is designed entirely to shew you, that it cannot be so proper for the members of any civil christian community, as a visible, general service. The former is piety, confined within your own breasts: the latter is that same piety, made exemplary to others. And while the former



can cherish religion, in a few individuals only; the latter does so, not merely in them, but in all that are about them.

How obvious is it to infer, that ‘ If even  
‘ those Absenters from the public worship  
‘ cannot be justified, who really pray at home;  
‘ much less still can be said for those, who  
‘ never pray at all !’

2. Hence it will likewise follow, that your own personal edification, is far from being your only point, in attending the service of the Church, and hearing the word of God.

---They that may not want edification themselves, should “ let their light shine before  
“ them that do.” Christianity does not consist in intricate systems, or refined subtleties; but in things which are level to all understandings. It was graciously given, to direct us in common, daily life. Its chief end is, to recommend and enforce a set of precepts, as plain as the prophet’s vision: “ He that  
“ runs, may read them.”

But, though the grand articles of religion be thus undeniably clear; yet how liable are they, to be slighted and forgotten! How do mens pleasures and passions, make them thoughtless of the most evident truths,

negligent of the most allowed duties ! It is not therefore Information which is so much wanted, as the being reminded and exhorted to practise what you know already. And though you are vastly too wise, to be instructed in any thing new ; you will frequently need your Saviour's admonition----  
" If ye know these things ; happy are ye, " if ye do them."

3. Lastly ; lest worldly business should prevent our assembling together, the custom of all Christians, as well as the laws of our own government, piously dedicate every seventh day to religious uses : that men may both be refreshed from their ordinary labours, and be put upon recollecting what is of superior, of more durable concern : that we may not be totally immersed in the cares of the present life, but have leisure to look forward, and make provision for another.

On common days, people in general cannot properly attend to subjects of this kind : and there are particular occasions, when the Sabbath itself may be innocently broken. " The Sabbath," says the Lord of it, " was made for man ; not man for the Sabbath." These, however, are cases of necessity ; which  
happen



happen so seldom, and affect so few persons, that they can be no disservice to religion, nor the least hindrance to the public worship. But whether the men, who never appear in any place of devotion, spend their time after a more rational, or a more profitable manner; let any one who knows their lives and conversation, determine for himself.

I am sure you have often remarked with concern, that the hours especially of this day, which might be improved to the most excellent purposes, hang like a dead weight upon the hands of some; and are wasted by others in vicious idleness, to the joint injury of their health, their morals, their families. What a reproach is this to a nation, where the Gospel is certainly as well understood, and perhaps I might say taught in as great purity, as amongst any of our Reformed neighbours. Yet the English, of all Protestant people, are distinguished by having the thinnest congregations, and the least veneration for the religion they profess.

It is a known truth, that 'Breaking the Sabbath, is an unhappy step to all iniquity;' that the people habitually guilty of this sin, are generally shameless profligate creatures, who

pay little regard to any other duty, treat every obligation with the like contempt. And how can it be otherwise, when the belief of religion, is the noblest principle of morality; a firm persuasion that "God will judge the world in righteousness," the strongest motive to all that is honest, or praise-worthy. Nothing can uniformly restrain us from wickedness, nothing can make us consistently good, but a just idea of a supreme providential Power, which it is our duty, as well as happiness, to worship, and to serve. The man therefore, who disclaims all such belief, will infallibly break through every rule of decency and honour, whenever his evil passions urge him to it; whenever he can evade human laws, or set them at defiance. And when once a person has brought himself, to despise the commandments of God; you have no possible tie upon him to obey the injunctions of men, any further than the scourge, or the gibbet, can compel him.

Will a servant regard the authority of a master, whom he may deceive every hour; when he thinks himself safe from all inspection of that Governor, whose eye no action, no thought, can escape? Will a son or a daughter



daughter curb their desires, to please an earthly parent; when a licentious education has divested them of all reverence for the universal, almighty Father? No! the Atheist himself, if he is not as mad as he is mistaken, will be a friend to private religion, as the surest bond of all private virtue; and to public religion, as the best preservative of national peace.

Let us then carefully shun an example, that has so little to recommend it; that is never likely to do any good, and cannot fail to do an infinite deal of mischief. Let us all be constant, in our attendance upon the service of God. Let each of you contribute his utmost aid, to encourage christian piety; and to suppress whatever debauches the minds, or manners, of the people. For whatever does this, does so far subvert all order, and puts every man's person, as well as property, in danger. By such behaviour therefore, you will take the best method to secure yourself (which is an argument, no mortal can refuse) while at the same time you will be highly useful to your fellow-creatures and fellow-christians.

I shall conclude with St. Paul's advice to the Hebrews, upon this same subject; comprehending in one brief sentence, the sum  
and

and substance of all other persuasives---“Be  
 “not in the number of them who draw back  
 “unto perdition, but of them that believe  
 “to the saving of the soul.”

To God, only wise--



# S E R M O N VIII.

PROVERBS xvii. 27.

*A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit,*

**T**HOUGH all things which God has made, be not endued with equal perfections, and do not carry in them the same degree of excellency; yet nothing appears, through the infinite variety of his works, but what has its peculiar excellence; but what displays such beauties as are proper to it, such as bespeak the wisdom and goodness of the great Creator.

These beauties are severally seen, these perfections estimated, by the uses, for which the frame and constitution of particular things declare them to be designed. Thus the excellencies of the Sun, are his blessed light, his genial heat, his enlivening influences upon us and other habitable worlds. Those

of

of an House, are not its mere size, but its construction; the convenience of its apartments, for human services. So the excellency of an Horse, is not mere strength, but shape, temper, and motions.

In like manner the rational part of the world has its perfections, which belong to its nature as such. Man, as a spirit, an intelligent Being, capable of reflecting, of distinguishing things and persons, of comparing them with himself, of perceiving the relation that each bears to the other; He, I say, should study to learn what his excellencies are: and his grand work should be, to endeavour to become master of them.

There is a certain turn or temper of mind, wherein the true grace, as well as happiness, of our human nature must necessarily consist. There are certain dispositions of soul, certain habits of action, which alone can procure the praise and felicity, the intended goodness and usefulness, of such a creature. Now this temper, or spirit, the wise man tells us, is to be attained by a right exercise of the understanding; that is, by our regularly and carefully improving all the powers, all the faculties, of our rational mind: the prime  
do or



or leading faculty, being here put to represent the whole rational powers.---In order that we may find out the truth of which proposition, let us consider,

I. What this understanding is, about what objects it is concerned, and in what way it is exercised.

II. The admirable effects of it, in forming our tempers, and regulating our actions.

III. After what manner, and by what means, it does this.---From all which, I shall draw a few plain, useful remarks.

I. then : In the literal sense, every man is born into the world with understanding : God has bestowed more or less of it, upon us all : it is what makes us men, what gives name to the whole species. But the mere talent, or natural faculty, is not the thing meant by the character in the Text. It is not the bare faculty, but the due exercise and improvement of the faculty, that either in common speech, or in scripture language, denominates a man of understanding. The just idea of such a person, can only be formed from considering the subjects upon which his understanding is employed, the uses to which he applies what he knows and understands.

It

It is a prodigious medley of things, that furnishes matter for mens thoughts, or understandings. The far greater part of them, are things external to us, that do not immediately concern our proper selves. We can live without them; are as wise, and verily as happy too, when we have them not. Among this number I reckon abundance of sensual and worldly delights; a great affluence of riches; posts of large profit; a superiority in rank, titles, and honours.

The ways, by which they must arrive at those darling objects, engage the studies, fill the hearts and wishes, of perhaps more than half the human race. But the understanding how to get them, proves a poor affair, without the understanding how to use them. Our pursuits after them, for the most part, are so far from refining a man's mind, from raising his temper and spirit either to peace within him, or humanity towards those about him; that they mar, debase, and spoil it. They are attended with restless and turbulent desires, with a thousand crosses and disappointments that plague and torment us. And when we have reached the point, we aimed at; what, or how much, have we acquired?



acquired? why, the art and power of indulging numberless extravagant fancies, of tasting numberless imaginary pleasures; which, besides the injury they often do to others, leave the man himself at last, exactly where they found him---in vanity and vexation of spirit. A rational mind should look further, and higher. For, if This be all; we are still far short of our true excellency!

Understanding the world, as we commonly term it, is frequently little more, than being a spectator, or a partaker, of human folly and misery. And understanding how to get the wealth, or preferments, of the world, is understanding how to get That, with which we may indeed do much service to ourselves, as well as others; but with which, if we have no better principle than this worldly wisdom to direct us, we shall infallibly do much mischief to Both.

Could any accomplishment of mere human knowledge, claim the title of that understanding, which enriches and adorns the mind of man; you might imagine it to be, the knowledge of ingenious arts, and liberal sciences; the knowledge of nature, the discoveries of philosophy. These are noble specu-

speculations; which, when reduced to practice, become of signal importance, both in private and public life. The theory of them, is exceedingly pleasing to the mind: and the application of them, frequently proves a blessing to a nation. But even in the Philosopher, or the Scholar, there are some other qualities requisite for rendering his knowledge really advantageous to himself, and truly beneficial to the world around him. Speculation, single and by itself, is a dry, lifeless thing; that may often dwell within a morose, a sour, breast. And human learning will flourish in many an ingenious head, that has an heart belonging to it, haughty, uncommunicative, unsociable.

Nay, once more; the understanding even of religious matters; an extensive knowledge even of the divine nature, of God's Word and his Will; is not the thing, which, by itself alone, deserves this character. For bare speculative religion is no better (I ought to say it is infinitely worse) than contemplative science. And you may, without much difficulty, find the man, who is both spiritually learned, and spiritually proud; who knows a great deal more about piety and morality



morality than his neighbours, but yet takes care to practise a great deal less.

Well therefore---that I may finish this first inquiry---When we have attained all other knowledge, what is there still wanting, to constitute the man of true understanding; in the scripture sense, and indeed in the only proper meaning that expression will bear?

To be brief then: Solomon's word Understanding, signifies the understanding, the consideration, of ourselves, and of the duties incumbent upon us as Men. His doctrine is---That our knowledge of all other subjects, should be made instrumental towards acquiring just sentiments concerning the supreme Governor:---That to fix in our hearts the love and fear of God, with a serious apprehension of our dependence upon Him, of the behaviour due from us as rational, social creatures; and to exemplify these principles, in a suitable course of action;---that This, I say, is the end of all true learning, the perfection of all sound and manly understanding.

This it is, which the holy Scriptures dignify, with the title of Wisdom: because it is the only knowledge, that can render a man

acceptable to his Maker, servicable to his fellow-creatures, or easy to himself; by producing in his mind, those dispositions, wherein its highest worth and beauty consist. When therefore this great Moralist had reckoned up all the accomplishments of the natural man, he found the conclusion to be this; "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole of man:---" it is that, which crowns and consummates all his other articles of knowledge, or forms the complete man.' In what instances it does so, let me now, Secondly, inquire.

II. Personal excellencies have relation, either immediately to a man's self, or to his esteem, and treatment, of other men.--- With regard to the man himself, the meaning of an "excellent spirit" is, a mind inwardly satisfied, contented, and happy; not in present airy notions, or whimsical conceits, that as soon pass away as they find entrance; but from what it feels within itself, whenever it reflects on its own principles and affections ---an happiness steady and permanent, because genuine and natural. Now this is the never-failing effect of that true piety, which is stiled in scripture wisdom, or understanding.

For



For wherever there is a conviction of duty, of a law directing a man to consult his obligations in all that he does or designs, and a consciousness of having actually obeyed this law; there must be contentment, there can be nothing but peace: since from hence arises every character, proper to rational self-enjoyment.

I. A regular command of all the passions.

The Almighty Creator, who made reason our first and ruling principle, has also implanted within us the several passions; that they might give a spring to the mind in her pursuit of what is praise-worthy, and increase her abhorrence of what is mischievous or sinful. Whenever these passions are indulged, till they gain the ascendancy over our better powers; the man is beneath himself: he feels the heavy hands of his tyrants: the things which he seeks as pleasures, become his pain, and his punishment. But the mind that understands itself, takes care to govern itself: places the government in right hands: uses the lower faculties, as ministers to its ease, its virtue, its interest. And when with a sense of its interest, it joins a sense of its duty to its Creator, and a conscientious regard to his

commands; its diligence is still increased; and the satisfaction, arising from that diligence, is increased in proportion.

You then see the man, in his truly rational, improved, state:---a man who \* rejoices in that only, which is good for him; but despises whatever would tempt him with false or hurtful enjoyment:---who is indeed † afraid of entering, or of being drawn, into a wrong, unbecoming action; but is bold and brave above all men, to act, or to suffer, in a laudable cause:---a man who can be ‡ angry, only so far as resentment is needful; and can generously forgive those failings in his fellow-creatures, which the rash folly of many others would prompt them to revenge:---who, in few words, || hopes for nothing, but what is well grounded, and worthy of a wise expectation; nor § grieves for any thing, more or longer, than its value will justify.

Here, now, is peace indeed! This is the mind, that is happy in itself, in its own

\* Joy.

† Fear.

‡ Anger.

|| Hope.

§ Grief.

just



just sentiments. And the wisdom of its conduct, cannot but be the most lovely sight, as well as the best example, to those who behold it.

2. Another instance wherein the "Man of understanding" discovers his "excellent spirit," is the prudence and fortitude with which he supports himself, under all the prosperous or adverse turns of worldly fortune.

In this first stage of our Being, we are set into a world, where a mixture of pleasure and pain, of good and evil, is dispersed around by the same divine providence, to exercise and to prove us. The understanding and using these aright, is what must qualify us for the blessings of a higher state; what alone can give us true content, while we remain in the present one. Weak, injudicious minds, that have no relish for any enjoyment except such as their senses administer, grasp at all temporal good with an eager hand; and place their felicity in the possession, their misery in the absence, of it. Thus they are elate and wretched, by turns; are at the mercy of every accident, to make them either the one or the other.

The person who truly knows the world, by truly knowing himself and his duty, proceeds after another method. He always carries his scales in his hand, weighs the pretended good that is before him, and gives it no more esteem than the intrinsic of it amounts to. He who aims at the spiritual life, will be cautious never to let carnal pleasures take too close hold on his affections. He, whose eye is fixed upon another world, will never overcharge his heart with the superfluous anxieties of the present one.

And this is the man, whom you will ever observe to bear both extremes of fortune with dignity. Who can be prosperous, without an haughty look; and be reduced to meaner circumstances, without meanness of soul, or poverty of spirit. Who feels but little pain from a disappointment, that would utterly sink an ambitious mind; is humble, gentle, and condescending. amidst all the grandeur, that would blow up the pride, turn the head, and ruin the whole temper, of a man devoted to this world. --- Such are fruits of a good mind, as they respect its Creator, and itself.

3. The



bl30 The excellence of a pious understanding, is equally visible, and cannot but be admired, in every branch of its conduct towards other men; in the very opinion such a person expresses, concerning his neighbour's intentions, actions, or accomplishments: upon all which, he always puts the most charitable construction. Whoever is sensible of his obligations, is sensible also of his infirmities: and ingenuously considering himself to be but a man, will treat every neighbour, every neighbour's case, with the tender compassion which humanity calls for.

From compassion, this good man rises to actual beneficence, towards all that lie within the sphere of his power. His reverence of God causes him to embrace with affection and good-will, all that bear the image of God. He beholds himself, and his own nature, in every other man; looks above the little distinctions, that are formed by prejudice, or party; and imitates the great Father of all, by being a friend to all.

I will sum up his amiable properties at once. He is wise for himself, out of love to his real self. He serves his country from

public principle. He serves individuals, from the delight he takes in doing good; from a firm persuasion that God requires it, and will reward it.

There are yet many particulars, comprehended under these general excellencies, in the spirit of the righteous man I have been describing. The sincerity, the "singleness of heart," the meekness and modesty, which are qualities inseparable from a truly pious disposition, heighten all its charms, and endear the soul that possesses them.

Such virtue is like the light of the sun (perfect beyond all other) a blessing not confined to person or place, but universally diffusive and beneficial. Of what enlargement would these topics be capable! But I will detain you no longer at present, than while I just ask the following question---'Whether the very imperfect sketch, even the very rough draught, I have here given you of this desirable character, does not incline you to wish that you could attain it yourselves, or at least that you could find it in every human creature about you?' And if you, in return, have another query to propose; namely, 'Though the man of understanding

is



' is confessedly the most finished character,  
 ' the happiest of men; yet why must Piety  
 ' alone be graced with this title? why is  
 ' Religion the only means, by which we can  
 ' become masters of this excellent spirit? ---  
 I shall endeavour to satisfy this inquiry, in  
 my next discourse.

To God, only wise...

SERMON

is constantly the most distinct character  
the nature of man, yet why man's  
alone begeth with the spirit which  
Religion is the only one which can  
become the object of the excellence of  
I think endeavour to satisfy this inquiry, in  
my next discourse.

PROVERBS X. 1.  
To God, only wise---  
As man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.

**I**n discoursing upon this subject, my first  
inquiry, as you may remember, was---  
What is the Foundation upon which God  
imparts his noble influence over  
the mind, or temper, of man? what is the  
Knowledge we must learn and acquire, if  
we would arrive at this Excellency of  
spirit.

I have observed to you, that it is not the  
mere common faculty of reason, which is here  
meant by the word understanding; because  
all men, more or less, possess this gift,  
whereof too many are found to make little or  
no improvement.

Not is it secular, worldly knowledge,  
which frequently degenerates into secular  
craft.



# S E R M O N IX.

PROVERBS xvii. 27.

*A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.*

**I**N discoursing upon this subject, my first inquiry, as you may remember, was---  
 'What is the Understanding, to which Solomon attributes this noble influence over  
 'the mind, or temper, of man: what is the  
 'Knowledge we must learn and acquire, if  
 'we would arrive at this Excellency of  
 'Spirit.'

I have observed to you, that it is not the mere common faculty of reason, which is here meant by the word understanding: because all men, more or less, possess this gift; whereof too many are found to make little or no improvement.

Nor is it secular, worldly, knowledge: which frequently degenerates into secular craft,

craft, into a thousand knavish devices to over-reach and out-wit one another; and consequently renders our tempers far worse, instead of bettering or refining them.

Nor, again, is it a superior share of human learning; or a superior taste for arts and sciences: because much learning has been often seen to dwell in a sour breast, and with a morose spirit.

Nay, lastly, it is not the bare knowledge even of religious matters, nor the understanding only of sacred things, that always produces this excellency of spirit; by purifying mens hearts, and giving all agreeable qualities to their minds. Since a man may know a great deal, and be good for very little. He may understand much himself, and yet may use his talents in so reserved, so uninformative, unpleasing a manner, as will make them of but small benefit to the community.

The thing therefore intended by Solomon's word Understanding, is the virtuous, the divine art, of understanding ourselves: a right sense of our own frame and constitution, of our duties and obligations as moral, social, creatures; a just apprehension of our Creator, of his providential designs in giving us our  
Being,



Being, and putting us together into the present world.

This the holy scriptures emphatically stile Wisdom, Knowledge, Discretion, Understanding. By which they mean such a principle of heart, as will direct and regulate a man's actions; such as will produce in him a conduct, that is worthy of his rational nature, of the relation he bears both to his Maker, and to all his fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects around him.

From such a principle I have accordingly shewn to flow, and by it to be procured, that inward peace and contentment, that good government of our passions, that wise estimate of temporal blessings and afflictions, that benignity and benevolence towards our neighbour, which constitute the true beauty, the true perfection, of the human mind or spirit.

III. The remaining part of my design is, to inquire, and inform you, why That which we name Piety or Religion, is the only principle, the only understanding, whereby any man can attain this excellent state of mind.

You may ask, why the mere sight, the mere conviction, of what is fit and reasonable,

is

is not alone sufficient to make us act reasonably: why the very pleasure of virtue, is not motive enough, to keep a man virtuous? why his innate taste of wisdom and beauty, cannot excite in him continual endeavours, to render himself and his conduct, wise and beautiful?

You may think, in short, we want no other obligation to morality, besides that moral knowledge, that moral sense of good and evil, which distinguishes us from the brutes. Why then, you may say, should religion, or a regard to the Will and Word of God, be at all considered, or taken into the account?

Now, most certainly, whatever is in itself right, or praise worthy, will remain so, and must appear so to every intelligent creature, without any command from any foreign power for esteeming it such. For as light, heat, colours, sounds, are uniformly felt, and clearly discerned by us, without any law, except the law of natural sensation, to direct our judgment about them, exactly so the moral virtues, veracity, justice, temperance, benevolence, carry their own evidence along with them, are their own motive, and have their own reward;



reward; provided nothing comes, in a violent manner, to debar them from that reward.

But here lies the grand point! Here it is, that you must especially remember mens real, actual circumstances, during this life of trial and imperfection. We have a "law of our minds;" and an admirable law too; a rule, founded in eternal truth and rectitude. ! But have we not also a "law of our members," warring against this law of our minds, and "often bringing it into captivity?" We have reason indeed, to shew us what are the proper excellencies of our nature; but we have passions likewise, to cloud, to deceive, and pervert it. We have a plain way before us; but what a world have we about us! how many thousand allurements, how many powerful temptations, how many fashionable bad examples, to seduce and draw us out of it!

In urgent and difficult cases, where Virtue cannot be her own immediate reward, but, on the contrary, brings upon us pain, losses, and disgrace, by cruel treatment from wicked men; can you seriously affirm, that there is no additional principle wanting, to secure the good resolutions of a man's mind; to guide  
and

and influence his practical understanding ; to support and complete his character ? What has the Fact appeared, in all preceding ages ? How many brave spirits have yielded up their fortitude, at the sight of torments, and the threatenings of misery ? What numbers have been overcome and broken, by persecution ? Or what has the majority of mere natural men been doing for thousands of years past, but prostituting their reason to their passions ; enslaving their spiritual and mental powers, to worldly and sensual affections ?

In plain truth, the condition of those virtues that are the perfection of the soul, would often be poor and pitiable indeed ; if a man had nothing higher than temporal views, if he felt no superior obligation upon him, for the practice of them ! Vice, which is the depravity of the mind, would pour in upon us like a deluge ; were there no conscience, no fear of God and his righteous judgments, to restrain its fury. How can you suppose, that a passionate, mortal creature, should “ hold fast his integrity ;” if it must frequently be done with great labour in this life, and without all prospect of any retribution or recompense in another ? With what spirit



## S E R M O N IX.

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spirit could you strive, against the reigning corruptions of the world; were it your only expectation to be discountenanced and abused by evil men here, and to fare no better than the very worst of them hereafter?

Upon the whole; natural good temper, or constitutional humanity, may be, and certainly is, the source of many single generous actions; which, wherever they are found, ought never to pass without their full commendation. But a steady course of morals, uniform through all its parts, proof against all difficulties and assaults----This can be generally established on no other foundation, than a firm belief of a future state; a firm persuasion, that "God will judge the world in righteousness, and render to every man according to his works."

So that, without any necessity of entering into a nice, philosophical examination, 'Whether it has not been, or is not still possible, that a very few particular men, originally formed with great minds and strong courage, may (upon the mere strength of that courage) persist, invincible by temptation, in the virtues that adorn our human nature;' it is abundantly sufficient, if

this cannot be affirmed concerning the bulk of mankind, nor be fairly expected from them.

But change the question now. Imagine a person to view himself under the character of a rational Being, the creature and subject of an all-wise, all-powerful Creator; endued with freedom of will and action, to imitate the perfections, and obey the laws, of this Creator; placed in society, to assist his fellow-creatures, to be proved and exercised by various trials; with the certainty of a glorious, an eternal reward, for his faithful services; ---from a man, I say, thus circumstanced, what improvements may you not foresee, what pious fortitude, what "excellence of spirit!" The assurance he has, that his duty and his happiness are thus everlastingly united, will animate him with incessant zeal in the cultivation of every virtue, that can be an ornament to himself, or a blessing to others. The pattern he follows, will set him above all danger from the examples of weak, or corrupted, men. Divine goodness is his pattern: and to copy that goodness, is the grand object of his ambition. The love he bears to mankind,

will



will be universal; "without partiality, without hypocrisy;" because he considers them all as his brethren, as children and servants of the same heavenly Father. A man like this, whose confidence is fixed in a future, eternal world, has a heart too great, a view too noble, to commit a mean, much more an injurious or malicious action, to gain all the short-lived honours and profits of the present one.

To have hope in the Almighty God, though it will not render you incapable of present evils, will afford you the truest support and comfort under them; will make you scorn to be depressed by the weight of those afflictions, that would quite sink and crush a different man. Though it will not exempt you from those trials, "whereof all are partakers;" it will inspire you with resolution to resist, and to overcome them.

This is the man, whom if you see surrounded with the choicest of earthly delights, with the means of gratifying every worldly, every carnal, desire; you will find him moderate and modest in the enjoyment of them all. If you behold him exalted to the most eminent stations, you will observe

him still humble and affable, where another man would domineer; candid and merciful towards those offences, upon which a man of the contrary spirit, would let fly his resentment with a terrible advantage.

And, to be short, make it your remark, if ever you saw, or heard of, or can conceive, a great and good man; who, without a steadfast belief in a Providence and a future state, did actually rule his own Spirit. Who was generous and undisguised, throughout all his transactions, all his conversation. Who was as chaste in the secret chamber, as in the open market-place. Who abhorred a private villainy, as much as the public infamy of it. Who never acted the politic, but always the moral man. Who had an opportunity of committing a fraud that would make his fortune, with a decent grace, with an utter impossibility of any discovery; but was as conscientious in doing right under this utmost advantage of concealment, as if the eyes of the whole world were fastened upon him.

This is indeed Perfection of Soul, and Excellence of Spirit: but it can only be produced by true piety---by a principle infinitely



initely superior to mere natural temper, to groveling worldly policy; or to any other knowledge, except the knowledge of ourselves, of God our Creator, Law-giver, and Judge.

I shall finish this subject with one or two reflections, which I apprehend are the most proper application I can make, of what has been said upon it.

I, then. If piety, or the knowledge and practice of religion, be the perfection of the human mind; I may safely venture to pronounce, that christian piety is particularly and especially so. If it be extremely difficult (perhaps altogether impossible) to become a valuable, or even a truly agreeable man, without a due sense of God, of our relation to Him, and expectations from Him;---if rationally devout sentiments concerning Him, concerning our obligations to reverence and obey him, have such an admirable effect upon our behaviour;---how happy must be the influence of that religion, which is not wrought with labour from our own mere reasonings or conclusions, but is delivered to us in clear, authentic expresses, from Heaven itself! A religion, wherein the Deity is

set forth, under every amiable, every august, idea, of infinite majesty, wisdom and goodness; wherein each duty is laid before us in its native simplicity, and at the same time is enforced by such powerful sanctions, by such "exceeding great and precious promises" of reward, by such just terrors of punishment, as cannot but put all sincere believers upon earnestly endeavouring to attain every virtuous quality, that will recommend them to their Maker, endear them to their fellow-creatures, and procure their eternal felicity. If such is the religion of the Gospel; ask yourselves, whether the most intense regard you can pay to it, be not your highest wisdom and understanding?

2. While we are attributing these excellent influences over the human mind, to Piety and Christianity; the very nature of the subject will call upon you to remember, that we can mean it only concerning genuine, scriptural piety; concerning primitive, uncorrupt christianity. It is not every scheme or system of religion, worked up by the artifice of some, by the wild fancy and frenzy of others, and then propagated with the heat



heat and fury of Either, that will give any man this glorious conduct of his own Spirit. No! Real Piety is the golden mean, betwixt Atheism on the one side, and Superstition on the other. Touching which two evils, it is no easy matter to decide, whether of them is the more dangerous, or pernicious, error. The former bids defiance to sacred things; the latter makes all sacred things ridiculous. And so far is a raging Enthusiast from improving his Spirit by his Religion, that he totally forgets, "what manner of Spirit he is of."

3dly, therefore: Let us here remark a plain, unerring rule, whereby we may all try ourselves, and learn what progress we have made in religion, what, in short, is the true state of our minds. The text teaches you to judge about your faith, as you would about a tree in your garden: "by its fruits you are to know it." If you think (as I suppose most men do) that your religious profession excels all others; search and examine, what excellencies you yourselves have attained by it. Observe and see, "whether it may not perhaps be very good in itself, but yet be made worth very little to you, through

"through your ill improvement of it." Has it wrought in you the christian and social virtues? Has it formed in you the image of God your Saviour, by righteousness, meekness, humility, mercy, and charity? Has it sweetened your tempers? Has it softened your spirits into sincere tenderness towards all men; out of honour to Him, whose creatures and children they all are? Or has it not left you still censorious, sour, selfish, and oppressive? If it has, be assured "God is not mocked," though you may easily deceive and delude yourselves!

If you imagine your hearts can be sanctified, by your believing at random what you do not understand, or by your suffering other people to believe and to live for you;---if you measure your religion by the length of your creed, not by the number of your good works;---or if you calculate your holiness by periodical rounds of devotion, by a circulation of stated prayers, or by a frequent attendance upon sacraments; without regarding the power of this godliness, as well as the forms of it;---in all these cases, you wilfully abuse the means, and utterly lose the end. You have no pretension to that Spirit



Spirit, which is the fruit of understanding; but are exactly like an ignorant, foolish husbandman, who makes a great boasting about his vineyard, without ever cultivating any good plants in it. So that, when autumn comes, he has nothing to do but to go and try, whether he can "gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles."

To the King Eternal---

deceive and delude yourselves! "is not mocked," though you may easily and oppressively. If it has, be assured "God not left you still contentious, your selfish, tires and children they all are. Or has it men; out of

If you imagine your hearts can be sanctified, by your believing at random what you do not understand, or by your suffering other people to believe and to live for you;--if you measure your religion by the length of your creed, not by the number of your good works;--or if you calculate your holiness by periodical rounds of devotion, by a circulation of stated prayers, or by a frequent attendance upon sacraments; without regarding the power of this godliness, as well as the forms of it;--in all these cases, you willfully spare the means, and utterly lose SERMON

To them who by patient continuance in well-  
 doing, seek for glory and honest and unmo-  
 rally, eternal life.

**ST. PAUL**, in this epistle, discourses  
 had two opposite, and very bitter parties  
 of men, to deal with; the Jewish and  
 Gentile Converts. The subject of their  
 contention was, "What, upon the true  
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 wide was the difference between them, that  
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 fectly agreed; namely, the judging and  
 condemning each other, without the least  
 tenderness or generosity.



# S E R M O N X.

ROMANS ii. 7.

*To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.*

**ST. PAUL**, in this epistolary discourse, had two opposite, and very bitter parties of men, to deal with;----the Jewish and Gentile Converts. The subject of their contention was, "What, upon the true Gospel-plan, were the fundamentals necessary to constitute a Christian." And so wide was the difference between them, that there seems to have been but one thing (and that an extreme bad one) wherein they perfectly agreed; namely, the judging and condemning each other, without the least tenderness or generosity.

To

To cure them of this evil, and to make way for the christian spirit amongst them; the Apostle, in these two first chapters, takes the most effectual method that could be; by laying before them the many enormous vices, of which they had Both been guilty: thereby to shame them into the acknowledgment of this conclusion: that "Those are the most  
 "improper people upon earth, to sit in  
 "judgment on the principles or spiritual  
 "estate of their brethren, who are in the  
 "worst condition themselves." It is the most impudent wickedness, for creatures destitute of common morality, to set themselves up as flaming zealots in the cause of piety, and to mark out for others the boundaries of truth, the limits of salvation! "Thou art  
 "therefore inexcusable, O man, whosoever  
 "thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou  
 "judgest another, thou condemnest thy-  
 "self."

Instead then of this mutually unjust proceeding, St. Paul endeavours to fix their thoughts upon that more equitable judgment, which we must All undergo, at the future tribunal of God; when an eternal period shall be put to all our uncharitable disputes.

When



when the merits of every cause shall be revealed; and every man be rewarded, not according to the angry censures or imperious determinations of his fellow-servants, but according to his own works: when a censorious spirit will appear foremost in the train of vices, which "treasure up for us wrath against that day of wrath;" and our only claim to that "eternal life" we all hope for, will be a "patient continuance in well-doing."

This was the occasion, and is the connection, of these words. And how much a serious consideration of the argument contained in them, is wanted at this particular time\*; I leave to be lamented by all, who have any regard for real, solid Christianity.

The text naturally leads me to observe,

I. The duty here required, as a qualification for the reward proposed; namely well-doing, and a patient continuance in the same.

II. The reward itself, under the character of life, with the three noble, happy circumstances,

that

shall be ours, when we shall have undergone the trial of the fire.

of God, which is the eternal period.

\* This refers to the late religious Controversies, which were prevalent at the time this Sermon was written.

that attend it; Glory, Honour, and Im-  
mortality.

III. How abundantly sufficient this re-  
ward is, to engage us in a careful exercise of  
the duty enjoined.

I. The expression of well-doing, is used  
by the scripture writers, either in a partial,  
or in a larger acceptation. It sometimes im-  
plies the whole of a virtuous life, or a general  
course of action agreeable to the christian  
precepts. At other times, it is made the  
characteristic of some particular duties, emi-  
nent for their value and importance.

Sober industry, with a modest and quiet  
attendance on the proper business of our re-  
spective callings, as distinguished from the  
conceited, disorderly, factious temper of too  
many, is thus named by St. Paul, in his  
second Epistle to the Thessalonians, where he  
advises them, "not to be weary in well-  
doing"---as the context clearly shews.

Submission to Princes, or Magistrates, has  
this special title given to it by St. Peter, in  
his first Epistle; where, remarking the ca-  
lumnny which the Heathens frequently throw  
upon the Christians, as a set of people dis-  
affected to the Roman Government, he exhorts  
them



them to "have their conversation honest  
 "among the Gentiles; that whereas they  
 "speak against you as evil doers," as sediti-  
 "ously or rebelliously disposed," they may by  
 "your good works," by your peaceableness  
 and loyalty, "which they shall behold, glo-  
 "rify God. For so is the Will of God,  
 "that by well-doing," by obeying them that  
 bear rule over you, "ye may put to silence  
 "the ignorance of foolish men." Further;  
 this phrase is particularly ap-  
 plied to the virtue of Humanity, or Bene-  
 ficence. That extensive duty is described, as  
 comprehending the idea of all good: and  
 they who practise it are, with peculiar em-  
 phasis, said to do good. In this notion  
 St. Peter tells you, that our Saviour "went  
 "about doing good"---doing acts of mercy,  
 such as healing the sick, casting out Devils,  
 and the like. In the same sense our Lord  
 demands of the Pharisees; whether "it were  
 "lawful to do good, on the Sabbath-day;"  
 and commands us to "do good, or to lend,  
 "hoping for nothing again." So Almighty  
 God is said to "do men good, filling their  
 "hearts with food and gladness." Such  
 is the character of this virtue, which springs  
 from

from a principle so divinely great; from the eternal Source of goodness and all perfection!

But lastly; I cannot help thinking the Apostle, by the expression in my Text, denotes that fundamental christian virtue, the love of truth; or 'a conscientious inquiry into the evidences of religion, into the Will of God; free from prejudice or passion, and uninfluenced by worldly motives.' For the well-doing in this verse, stands opposed to the temper which he condemns in the next; namely, the "being contentious, and not obeying the truth"----an ignorant, raging zeal, for Jewish or Heathen doctrines, that were supported by mere custom, by mere human authority; that never came from God, and tended only to the temporal emolument of the men who taught them.

Thus does Christianity recommend itself as meriting universal acceptance, by the very nature of its demands upon mankind;----by making religion consist, as to the practical part, in the observance of those moral duties, which are indispensably needful towards our public as well as private happiness; and by requiring no more of the speculative part, than an honest desire to learn



learn the truth, an impartial readiness to embrace it.

Of a quite contrary spirit were the persons, for whose reformation the Epistle before us was written. The Jewish Christians, educated in the schools of the Pharisees, strove hard for the traditions of their Mother-church; and resolutely concluded that nothing could be truth, which overturned the maxims, or reflected upon the credit, of their old Masters. The Gentile Converts had lived under their Priests, and had imbibed the subtle wisdom of their Philosophers also; which rendered them equally averse from renouncing their errors, and submitting to the simplicity of the Gospel.

With these difficulties our blessed Saviour's own ministry was attended. He came into the world for this purpose, that He might "bear witness unto the truth;" which drew upon Him the "contradiction of sinners." "Have any of the Rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on Him;" was made a grand objection to his doctrine, after He had confirmed it by reason, by Scripture, by miracles. The men who succeeded Him in preaching his religion, were reproached as "Setters forth

“ of strange Gods ;” merely because senseless, idolatrous worship, had long prevailed.

Indeed, as Christianity itself was a reformation of gross corruptions, arising from the knavery or stupidity of those, who for many ages had been involving others, or suffering themselves to be involved, in superstitious darkness ; and as it could hardly expect a better reception from a “ contentious” world, not disposed to “ obey the truth ;” --- so, I say, all honest attempts to rectify abuses in any age whatever, even among Christians, will often share a similar fate. The Authors of such attempts, though ever so like their blessed Master in the love of God and of his truth, and in that charity to mankind which is the very bond of peace, will be branded, like Him and his Apostles, with the odious terms of Innovators, “ Who come to turn “ the world upside down.”

In short, this generous love of truth, as it regards our faith, and as it affects the heart, is the radical principle of “ well-doing ;” and requires the most unshaken resolution, the most “ patient continuance,” to nourish it, and to produce it into practise. This noble perseverance has ever been the trial, as well



well as the triumph, of great and good minds ; that has made them, what our holy profession obliges them to be, the " salt of the earth, " the light of the world." And for this, or else for nothing, is intended that blessing of eternal life, which I come now to consider.

II. The bliss, reserved for the faithful in a future state, is usually represented by the words Life, and Entering into Life---into a state of existence that deserves indeed to be called life, when compared with that imperfect, low degree of it, which we now lead in the flesh ; limited to the narrow compass of a few senses, whose strong and numerous impressions so forcibly divert us from our best pursuits, and press down the mind from attaining her true, her proper accomplishments.

And so incapable are we at present of rising any higher than these same impressions, or our own reflections and refinements upon them, will carry us ; that the Scriptures are forced to set forth the future life by such figurative language, as does but barely express its greatness, not its adequate or full notion. In the mean time, the best conception we can form about it, will be gained by considering those moral graces, which are the ornament, and

consequently the happiness, of every reasonable Being. "By contemplating the duties enjoined us in this life, we get the only just idea of our felicity in the next."

The plainest promises, relating to that heavenly state, are; that "We shall be as the Angels;" that "We shall see God," and "be like Him." Whence you may certainly collect, that it will consist chiefly in the advancement of our spiritual part; of those rational powers, by a right use whereof we are trained to virtue Here, to a pious imitation of the supreme goodness; and, in reward of that virtue, shall Hereafter be raised to a far higher, a far more blessed similitude, of the infinite Original.

Thus, when our Understandings, now so contracted, so confined, shall have their capacity enlarged, and a more spacious field of knowledge laid open to them;----when our Wills, now so prone to irregularity and vice, shall be steady in the pursuit of their proper good, and be no longer with-held from it by error, prejudice, or passion;----then shall we live indeed! And as we shall then answer the truest ends of life, we must needs enjoy its truest pleasures.

And



And this at the same time shews you, on whom, on whom only, this bliss will be conferred. The Object of the Understanding is truth, or the various natures and relations of things : the object of the Will (free and unvitiated) is justice, righteousness, holiness. They alone therefore, who "rejoice in the truth," are worthy to be filled with its delights from the fountain of truth : they alone, who "have pleasure in righteousness," can ever become members of that society, whose blessing it will be to go on from perfection to perfection in the love and practice of all righteousness.

You see then pretty clearly in general, what the future happiness of pure, uncorrupt minds, must necessarily be. But we should take special notice of its three particular circumstances, mentioned by the Apostle; Glory, Honour, and Immortality.

1. The conceits men at present indulge concerning Glory, are for the most part exceedingly unphilosophical and superficial. A needless abundance of riches, an elevated station, a pompous preeminence above others, an arbitrary command over things and persons ;---these exactly answer the popular,

current meaning, of this word. And these, while they are the promiscuous lot of the least as well as the best accomplished men; while, at their highest tide, they are incommensurate to the noble ambition of a rational soul; changeable, as the world we live in; and short, frequently shorter, than life itself;---are yet generally grasped at with an eagerness of emulation, far beyond their worth; and are often obtained by the most unjust, the most unequal, measures. Thus men shine with plumes, that are only spoils snatched from their neighbour; which have no relation to their real selves; and which, even as soon as attained, either leave us, or we leave them!

But the future, celestial glories, will be of quite another kind; whether you consider wherein they are to consist, or by what means they are to be purchased. For they will be such ornaments, as strictly belong to us; such as are within us, and properly our own; such as grace the mind itself, and lift it to the resemblance of the all-perfect Mind." Here, then, lies our only true ambition; 'to set our hearts upon these unfading glories; to aspire after what is  
'essen-



‘essentially good, to see it clearly, and to follow it uninterruptedly.’

2. The next circumstance, is Honour: by which I understand that esteem, or commendation, which men, or any intelligent Beings, conceive and express of our good actions and qualifications. How egregiously this also, both the word and the thing, is mistaken by mankind in the present world; appears but too obvious. Scarcely can you name a matter so trivial, or an exploit of the worst, the basest quality; that does not assume the character, which, above all others, should be free from profanation. Victories and triumphs, though over the most innocent, or in ever so vile a cause; impatience under a slight affront; personal revenge of injuries, and carving out justice for ourselves, in defiance of all law or government; the servile homage of Inferiors in one sense, though perhaps Superiors in all others; ---- These are the subjects, that challenge the title of Dignity and Honour. Thus the Great amuse their own fancies: and the Sycophants about them, contribute to cherish those passions, the very reverse of which, when duly considered, are far more

agreeable to their sober judgments, and calm reflections.

The honour we shall hereafter receive for well-doing, is totally different. The praises we shall then find, will all be founded upon real excellencies; upon the principles of consummate reason. Infinitely superior to all weak partiality, they will exactly correspond with the merit of the actions we have done, and with the virtuous dispositions that adorn our minds. The victories to be then sung, are victories over enemies indeed; over Sin, Satan, and a sinful World: nay, what is still greater, over Ourselves:----conquests so truly glorious, that most of those which have been gained over kingdoms, or fenced cities, appear, upon the comparison, contemptible and criminal.

Moreover; this Honour will be paid us, not by judges of vulgar ideas, or giddy apprehensions; but of exquisite wisdom, and unerring truth. For we shall be commended by God, supremely wise; by those blessed Angels, who excell in knowledge and purity; by those "just men made perfect, who dwell "in light" because they loved the Truth, and "patiently continued," not barely professing



professing it, but acting according to it.

Finally. That which will complete this honour, and that without which all honours are but mere vanities, is, that we shall be able to approve and value ourselves; to entertain the applauses of others with the concurring testimony of our own hearts, with an humble and delightful assurance that they are given us as our just, though generous, reward.

3. The third and last circumstance attending the heavenly life, is Immortality.----As the want of this circumstance is really an advantage, when applied to our present Being; (for who that has any taste of rational life, would wish to abide continually in a vicious, contentious world?) so the addition of it crowns and consummates the future state. Imagine your pleasures ever so refined, your perfections ever so exalted; yet to foresee their final dissolution, to know they must one day absolutely end, would much abate their relish, and damp the enjoyment of them. But when you conceive their duration adequate to their excellence, you then have the idea of finished happiness.

The good and gracious God therefore, out of love to those who sincerely love his Truth,  
and

and "hold it in righteousness," has laid up for them treasures which He has made fully great, by making them inexhaustible. He is pleased, in return for our faithful services, short and imperfect as they are, not only to bestow on us a "weight of glory;" but, that it may be Heaven indeed, He has promised it shall be "eternal."

III, then. Divine Wisdom itself could not have given us more engaging arguments for the practice of every thing that is praiseworthy, than are offered to us in the Gospel-Dispensation. God has exactly adapted our future recompence, to our present duties, and condition of life: so that the difficulties we meet with, and pass through here, are the very means that qualify us for proportional measures of happiness hereafter. His righteous Providence, which made us intelligent creatures, has placed us in a field wherein we are to search after Truth, amidst many differences and disputes about it, many sad instances of deviation from it. Justly is this permitted, even among Christians; that so room may be left for rational choice, for the exercise and reward of that Virtue, which prefers Truth above all things,

He



He has commanded us to yield up even life itself, in defence of his honour: but it is only that we may receive this same life again, more glorious, and more honourable.

Having therefore these promises, Brethren, let nothing induce you to depart from that love and fear of God, that regard to the truths of the Gospel, and that charity towards men for Christ's sake, which, through all ages of his Church, have been most effectual to save, though most neglected in practice. And be not servilely conformed, either to the vices, or to the errors, of this world; but "be transformed continually, by the "renewing of your minds," by the improvement of your judgments and understandings: that you may be daily more and more able to discover, as well as willing to perform, the "good and acceptable and perfect Will of "God; from whose abundant bounty, we hope for "Glory, Honour, and Immortality."

To Him be praise and dominion, both now and for ever.

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2013



# S E R M O N XI.

MATTHEW iii. 8, 9.

*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.*

*And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*

**J**OHAN the Baptist was that messenger or forerunner of Christ, whom the prophets Isaia and Malachi foretold God would previously send, to give notice of his coming: to prepare mens minds for embracing the pure religion He should afterwards establish; and to render them worthy subjects of that spiritual government, whose laws were intended to influence our hearts, to regulate the moral conduct of our lives.

Thus

Thus, as Isaiah describes him, " He prepared the way of the Lord, and made straight in the desert an highway for our God"---alluding to the custom of warlike princes, who, before they began any solemn march, or triumphal procession, issued orders that the roads should be cleared and levelled, for their easier passage. So our supreme Master expects, that all who desire to enter into his heavenly kingdom, who hope to obtain his favour or forgiveness, should rectify their ways; should cleanse their hearts from all their sinful prejudices, from all their former worldly lusts; and should receive his commands, with submission and integrity. This is the Moral of those words, " Let every valley be exalted, every mountain and hill be made low: let the crooked be made straight, and the rough places plain."

Thus, again, this eminent Preacher fulfilled the character given of him by the prophet Malachi: " He turned the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers: that is, he converted all orders, all ranks, of men---all, I mean, that would be converted; all that would

hearken



Well; and what was the doctrine, by which he thus benefitted mankind; or put them into the way of being accepted by God, through Christ the Saviour? Why, it was the plain, necessary doctrine, of reformation and repentance. It was the doctrine of the "Love of our Maker, and our neighbour"---that natural, effectual method, of rendering men useful to others, as well as happy in themselves---that only preparative, for the rewards of the Gospel, and the blessings of Heaven---that very thing, which many people are so afraid should prove too little to save them, and yet so few can be persuaded to endeavour after, or to become masters of! They who think it so little, can yet hardly ever be induced to perform that little!

The good Baptist knew no other qualification, requisite either for bringing a man to Christ at first, or for making him afterwards live like a Christian. Therefore, when the different sorts of people asked him 'What

“this reformation must be; and how they should practise it, in their several particular professions;” his only reply was, that “They should avoid the corruptions, should follow the justice and honour, proper to their respective situations, or employments.”

To his Hearers in common, he prescribed benevolence, friendly action, mutual and brotherly kindness: “Let him that hath two coats, impart to him that hath none: and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.” And when the Publicans, or Gatherers of the Roman Taxes, inquired, “Master, what shall we do?” “Do not exact,” says he; “do not extort: keep within the law, and injure no man.” So to the Soldiers, whose great temptation was rapine and plunder, his lesson was; “Do violence to no one, but be content with your wages”---“live quietly and honestly, upon your military pay.”

Thus you see, from the Baptist's doctrine, that the christian life, is a life of virtue; shewing itself in a behaviour suitable to the relations of things and persons; encouraged by a sense and reverence of God, by a belief



of his divine providence, of his holy word and promises.

And it does not appear but that the people in general were perfectly satisfied with the terms proposed to them by their new Teacher, till the Scribes and Pharisees (those blind guides, who first led the blind to place their hope of God's favour on any weak foundation, sooner than on a faithful discharge of their duty) till they, I say, interposed, and stopped the progress of this salutary doctrine. For they had their heads filled with quite other notions, quite other designs! They expected their Messiah, indeed; but expected He would save them, not from their sins, but in the midst of all their sins. They looked upon themselves as the sons of Abraham, as the chosen people of God. They thought the sole, the single object of Christ's Coming was, that 'He might raise them and their nation, to temporal dominion; and work for them a salvation, without condition or reserve.'

Such were the men, such their criminal and fatal delusion, at which the words of the text were originally levelled. And had so presumptuous an opinion infected none but

bigoted, self-conceited, Jews; had it died with them, and never revived again; happy would it have been for us! Whereas, alas! men of all religions, even Christians of all denominations, have too frequently copied this unworthy example, by profanely relying on the mercies of their Redeemer, while they paid little or no regard to his express commands. As these Jews depended solely on God's promise to Abraham, and on being the mere literal "Seed of Abraham after the flesh," without taking the least pains to inherit, either his faith, or his works; --- so have Christians done in their religion, and so they do still.

I purpose therefore, with your leave,

I. To lay before you some instances of this sad mistake, among Christians at large.

II. To shew you how it contradicts the whole tenor of Scripture, all the dispensations and dealings of God with those who have been called his Church, or People.

III. After which, there will be no great difficulty in applying what has been said, to ourselves of this nation more particularly.

I. First then, I say, this Jewish error, this dangerous vanity, of claiming divine favours, merely



merely because they bear an external relation to God, or live under his covenant and true religion, has spread itself far and wide through the Christian world. It undoubtedly began to do so, in the very earliest days of the Gospel. Our blessed Saviour too visibly foresaw it, when He gave his followers this earnest caution; that "Many would call him "Lord and Master"---would pretend to acknowledge Him, or to believe on Him, and perhaps in their way be very zealous for Him---but yet would "never do the things, "which He enjoined them."

The Apostles, throughout their writings, complain of many nominal Christians, who "professed to know God, but in works denied Him." And the antient Hereticks (who were so stiled, not for barely erroneous, but for wicked, noxious tenets) they would allow no men to be so intimately connected with Christ, as themselves; though, of all men living, they were the furthest from Him.

The times nearer to our own, will supply you with still more numerous examples. In all the nations around us, subject to the Popish Superstition, the great majority of

the people verily think themselves the only true Christian, Catholic, Church. Out of which, there can be no possible salvation: but in which, a very slight matter will be sufficient to render them absolutely certain of it.

And how should they think otherwise, when they are taught from their cradles, that Christ invested St. Peter, not merely with infallibility, but with an unlimited authority to retain or remit the sins of men; that from him their Popes, and from them their Priests, universally inherit these enormous prerogatives? Hence the grossest vices, without being at all forsaken, without any “fruits meet for repentance,” are only confessed, and then absolved; committed again, and again absolved! And as the disciples of the Pharisees were wont to plead, “We have Abraham for our father;” just so these insatuated creatures say in their hearts, ‘The pope, the grand vicar of Christ, is our all-knowing father and guide: the infallible church is our security.’

Well; but, allowing this to be the case with papists; yet who can there be amongst us of the protestant, of the reformed name, upon



upon whom such an accusation will justly fall, or that are fairly chargeable with the unchristian error censured in the text? I answer, every man amongst us, who founds his confidence, and places his merit, in the bare outward privileges of his profession. Who fancies himself intitled to the blessing of God, only because he has been baptized into the covenant of Christ; or because he belongs to a religious community, more pure (I mean less corrupt) than some others. Who does not hope that he shall go to Heaven, for his own personal virtues; but trusts that he shall pass unnoticed in the croud, or be saved by the orthodoxy of the sect and party to which he has joined himself. Who never ceases to condemn the absurdities of the papist, or the wild frenzies of the enthusiast; but takes no heed, all the while, to cultivate in his own breast the moral graces of the christian.

Or he is that man, who is constant and fervent in a circle of ceremonies, in a round of set prayers; and a rigid frequenter of sacraments; but yet is not one bit less addicted to intemperance, injustice, scandal, and censoriousness, than the most irreligious neighbour he has.

Or, finally, he is the person, who deceives his heart with a notion, that God has so irreversibly chosen, elected, predestinated him, for heaven and happiness; that Christ is bound to save him, though he never set a single step towards saving himself.

All these, or whoever act upon similar principles, are the Christians, who, with as little reason, and to as vain a purpose, call Christ their Saviour; as the Jewish Pharisees boasted of old, that "Abraham was their Father."

II. Let me now observe to you, the falsehood, the palpable folly, of all such expectations.---Think first upon Almighty God, the universal parent and governor of mankind, He who created man after his own likeness, a moral, intelligent Being; can take no pleasure in, can annex no divine rewards to, any religious services; but such as are spiritual and rational; such as tend from their own nature, by their own intrinsic goodness, to renew in us that resemblance of Himself, after which we were originally formed. He who "hath made all men of one blood, to dwell upon the face of the earth;" can never behold one man, or one nation of  
men,



men, with any looks of weak fondness or partial respect. All are alike his creatures and servants: all are equally related to Him, the Father of all. He may, doubtless, for sundry wise, providential causes, bestow on some persons larger talents, more extensive advantages of light and knowledge, than on others: but He will finally deal with "all, according to the use they make of the blessings He has vouchsafed to them. He will require no more from any man, than the improvement of what was given him--- will not fail to demand much, where much has been granted; and to punish most, where most has been neglected. All this, I apprehend, is not only undeniably true; but obvious to every reasonable mind.

Let us however search and see, throughout his own word, what the Fact has been in all ages; in all his dispensations with mankind, from the first creation, to the day wherein we all now live.

Adam was the son of no man, but is called the son of God---the immediate work of the supreme, almighty Hand. He was favoured with a promise of immortality. But that promise had its limits. For even this

our great common Ancestor, born as he was of God, yet, upon his transgression, forfeited his paradise, and his immortality.

Enoch, indeed, may be stiled the immortal man: for God exempted him from the common fate of death. But it was, because he “walked with God,” in piety and righteousness.

Noah “found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” and had a covenant of grace made with him. But are you not expressly told the reason—that “he was a just man, and perfect in his generation?”

Go down lower: Abraham, the Father these Pharisees were so proud of; upon what terms did He receive his covenant, or the divine promises to himself and his posterity? Read them, in the plain words of scripture: “Walk before me, and be thou perfect: and I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations.” And how was that seed, that nation of the Jews, to enjoy this covenant? Nothing can be more explicit, than the conditions! “If ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment, between a man

“ and



“and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the  
“stranger, the fatherless, and the widow;  
“nor shed innocent blood, in this place; nei-  
“ther walk after other Gods, to your hurt;  
“then I will cause you to dwell in this  
“place, in the land that I gave to your fa-  
“thers, for ever and ever.”

Well: And how did God generally, as  
well as finally, treat that covenanted nation?  
Why, after their sins had been visited with  
repeated judgments; and they had filled up  
the measure of their former iniquities, by  
rejecting and slaying the “Prince of life;  
“they were utterly discarded, captivated,  
“enslaved: and to this day, for more than  
sixteen hundred years, have been banished  
and dispersed into all quarters of the globe;  
without temple, without government; with-  
out God for their protector, without the  
Messiah for their Saviour.

“The kingdom  
“of heaven is taken from them, and given  
“to others, to bring forth the fruits of it.”

And verily the declaration, made by the holy  
Baptist, must needs be true---that “God,  
“rather than own such rebellious, incorri-  
“gible creatures, for his peculiar people, or  
“the children spiritual of Abraham, would

“have

“have taken up the very stones of the street,  
“and from them have produced children to  
“that faithful Patriarch.”

But, leaving these forsaken tribes; let us  
turn our eye towards the christian world.---  
What is become of those famous Churches,  
to whom the Apostles preached, and wrote  
their Letters; Galatia, Ephesus, Corinth,  
Philippi; concerning which St. Paul says,  
that their faith and charity were celebrated  
in all the earth? Where are the Churches of  
Asia, to whom St. John gave his lessons,  
and his warm advices? Behold! our own  
travellers, that have seen their wretched re-  
mains, can tell you---“They are left, as  
“cottages in a wilderness;” are reduced to  
be the habitations of a few indigent fisher-  
men, or of wild beasts: “in a land,” as the  
prophet speaks, “which no man passeth  
“through, where no man dwelleth!” And  
whence came all this desolation upon them?  
The same St. John points out its source---  
“They forsook their first love; they imagined  
“themselves rich, not knowing that they were  
“poor and blind and naked: they would not  
“repent, nor do their first works: and therefore  
“the candlestick was removed from them.”

One



One great western Church, indeed, still continues; but continues stript of all her primitive Christianity; and "knoweth not that," amidst all her worldly grandeur, "She too is poor and blind and naked;"----the Church of Rome still subsists, after having been corrupted for above a thousand years!. But I hope you remember that, "in the sight of God, a thousand years are as a single day!" And they who know the holy scriptures, the holy prophets, and the power of God, know beyond a doubt, that her period is fixed; or that, if the hour of her judgment has been prolonged, it is only that her destruction may be the more signal. When, as St John assures you all, "The heavens and the earth, the holy Apostles and the Prophets, shall rejoice over Her; and her plagues shall be great. For her sins have reached to Heaven: and strong is the Lord God Almighty, who shall judge Her."

III. It is high time now, that we bring all these reasonings, these sacred scriptures, and examples of God's providence, home to ourselves.---Many persons perhaps may imagine, and flatter themselves with a persuasion, that "This Nation, this Protestant Church

of

“of our’s, will never feel the divine displea-  
“sure, which has been exercised upon those  
“who are gone before us ; because upon Us  
“seems to rest the whole weight and mo-  
“ment of the protestant cause : so that, if  
“we were swallowed up, the kingdom of  
“Christ could no were be found.” Alas,  
for our ignorance ! God has a thousand  
ways, ten thousand instruments, by which  
He can bring his decrees to pass ! And the  
fulness of Christ’s kingdom will surely come,  
though we, for our transgressions, may all  
be destroyed ! He who formed man from the  
dust of the earth, is able, from the stones of  
that same earth, to raise up children unto  
Abraham, and a kingdom unto Christ !

But let God’s present dealings with us, as  
we are a christian nation, be what they will ;  
each particular man for himself, has a future,  
an eternal concern of his own, to look after.  
And this is, above all things, most certain,  
most interesting ; ----that as many amongst  
us as have lived wickedly, and, instead of  
“bringing forth fruits meet for repentance,”  
have borne a wicked part in promoting the  
luxuries, the vices and impieties, of their  
country ; can never be numbered with the  
sons



sons of Abraham, or with the servants of Christ. But, at the universal judgment, they will be sentenced to receive that very punishment, which our blessed Master denounced against those impenitent Jews, to whom the Baptist spoke the words of my text. "Many," says our Lord, "shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; while the children of the kingdom,"---all who profess the true religion, but do not practise it----"shall be cast out into outer darkness; where will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

To God, only wise---





## S E R M O N XII.

I JOHN iii. 4.

*For sin is the transgression of the law.*

**T**HE scriptures of the New Testament employ various arguments, all strong and proper in their kind, for reclaiming men from vice to the practice of virtue. They persuade us by the love of God, and by the fear of Him; by a grateful sense of his infinite goodness; by the dread of his almighty power and justice. They exhort us by the mercies and merits of Christ; by his life, and shining example; by his precious death to save us; by his Spirit to guide us, his commission to judge, reward, and punish us.

But these last motives are able to affect those persons only, who both believe the  
holy

holy scriptures, and frequently meditate upon them. They prevail only with men of serious minds; so as to bring them to reformation, and timely repentance: while many other hearts are dull, froward, and untractable; and must be attacked with arguments, that come more immediately to the point. Nothing less than the reason and nature of the thing, nothing but direct self-love and self-interest, can convince them, or make them yield. And happy were it for them, if this would do! Since a right apprehension of their own interest, will set all other inducements in their fairest light, will give every divine sanction its fullest authority,

St. John's words which I have chosen for the text (taken in their largest sense) are of this decisive sort. They strike "at the root of the tree." They shew you the folly of vice (and consequently the superior wisdom of virtue) by the very notion, the very idea, of it, by defining it, and placing the definition before your eyes; so that you may behold, at one view, its nature, with all its properties and consequences. "It is the transgression of the law."



I purpose, in what follows, to give the word Law its most extensive signification; and to inform you,

I. What is the general law of man, as a rational creature: and what are the several parts of that law, whereof sin is the transgression.

II. Thence to remark the certain qualities and effects of vice; as they flow, not from any arbitrary appointment of Almighty God, but from the nature of things, from the nature of man himself.

III. To apply the whole, as a dissuasive from an immoral life.

I. When we use the term Law, with respect to the inanimate parts of the creation; our common reason (at least our true philosophy and experience) tells us, that it is only in a figurative, not in a literal, acceptation. When, for instance, we speak of those general stated rules, by which material bodies are moved, or acted, for certain ends and purposes; by which the sun rises upon the earth, and the heavenly bodies perform their revolutions; by which the trees grow upward, and the stone falls to the ground; by which, in short, all the material world preserves that exquisite order, wherein we behold it; and

when we call these the laws of their nature; or of their motion; we really mean no more, than that impulse or impression, which the great Creator continually exerts upon them, for accomplishing the designs of his creation and providence. The bodies themselves

can neither move, nor act. They are entirely passive, are altogether insensible of their own existence, as well as of the Hand that governs them.

Again; there is likewise what you may stile a law, whereby the animal or brute tribes are directed. But this is nothing higher, than the mere influence of certain appetites, or passions: over which appetites, they have no moral command; no prudence, no foresight, to regulate or restrain them. And hence they are not accountable for their actions; because they have no idea of any circumstances or consequences attending those actions.

Law therefore, strictly speaking, can belong only to reasonable creatures; to Beings who possess understanding, and liberty: who can will and choose, can act, or forbear acting, in compliance with the dictates of that understanding. And their law is the obligation they



they are under, to prefer and practise some actions, to refuse and reject the opposite ones. Of this obligation they become sensible, by the very natural frame of their minds; by their natural power of distinguishing things and persons, of comparing them together, and finding the difference, or relation, between them; of reflecting, in short, upon themselves, and the objects that surround them: whence arises the conviction they have (and must inevitably have, if they will exercise their faculties) concerning the fitness, or the moral necessity, of doing some things, and avoiding others.

Moreover. As such a Being cannot but discover, that some conduct uniformly produces ease and pleasure, while the contrary creates uneasiness and pain, to himself as well as to his Fellow-Beings; he cannot help concluding, that the one is agreeable to his nature, and to the state he is placed in, the other utterly inconsistent with Both.

Let us now apply this to man, as a creature compounded (if you will permit the expression) of reason and bodily affections. Let us inquire whether he has not a plain law, injoining him sundry articles of behaviour, with

regard to himself, his fellow-creatures, and his Creator.

As to himself, every man knows the two main parts, of which he consists. He knows that his mind is furnished with understanding, and reflection. He finds truth, the natures and relations of things, set before him, as the objects of his contemplation. He finds happiness and misery, honour and infamy, left to his own free choice, to the free determination of his actions. On the other side, he feels that he has bodily appetites; subservient to all the best operations of his mind, to all the best ends of his life, when indulged within a certain just measure: but, when kept under no restraint, they darken the understanding, deprave the will, put the whole soul into a ferment, weaken and kill the body itself.

Consult now, I beseech you, your own impartial sentiments; whether for such a creature not to maintain the due temper and decorum of his mind; not to preserve his rational powers, free and unimpaired, that he may discern his real, essential good; but to let them be suppressed by the violence of passion, or resigned to the wild direction of lewd,



law, extravagant fancies ; does not as palpably contradict nature, and all natural propriety ; as it would, for an army to be headed by a mad man, or a nation to be under the dominion of a senseless and lawless tyrant.

That we should govern ourselves therefore by the dictates of reason, and by a subjection of the lower inclinations to them ; is a principle as evidently a law as sacred, as reason itself, as nature, facts, experience, can manifest any thing to be.

The law a man finds himself bound to observe towards other men, is equally obvious. Here he considers himself as a member of a body ; as a part, helping to support the life and health of the whole civil constitution. Society is the field, wherein his talents are to be exercised. No person living is absolutely unconnected, or independent. Our natural wants, and desires ; our business, nay our very pleasures ; perpetually call for mutual assistance, benevolence, and fidelity. We are so formed, and so placed ; that every individual contributes, more or less, to the benefit or injury, to the good order or confusion, of the community he resides in.

O 3

Whoever

Whoever therefore should harbour an imagination, that there is no tie upon him to reverence his superiors, or to practise truth, justice, and kindness, toward those about him; Whoever should pretend to maintain, that treachery, oppression, robbery, rebellions are matters harmless and indifferent; would make himself the same monster of a man, as he who should affirm that fevers, ulcers, and convulsions, are innocent to the natural body; or that the world would lose none of its beauty or its use, though the stars were to leave their spheres and to rush against each other, the sun to forsake the earth, and the seas to overwhelm the dry land.

3. Finally, if you consider Almighty God; the very supposition of a Creator, the supreme, free Cause of existence and happiness, to an intelligent creature; to a creature endued with understanding, capable of knowing itself, and Him who gave it being;—this very relation, I say, does as clearly prove an obligation upon such a creature, to adore and worship its Maker; to search into his will, to obey his commands, and to pursue the apparent intentions of his providence; as the structure of the eye and of the ear, compared

with



with the natures of light and sounds, proves that the one was made for seeing, the other for hearing. And he who dares to deny these everlasting moral truths, as grossly affronts his judgment, as the man who disputes against a mathematical proposition, fairly and demonstrably laid before him.

Having thus briefly shewn you, what is the Law of man; I proceed,

II. To consider Sin, or Vice, as the transgression of that Law; to remark its genuine properties and consequences; as flowing, not from any arbitrary Will or appointment of God, but from the condition of man, from the circumstances of his Being.

If reason has assigned to every man a certain rule of action; if our very frame and constitution, the relation we bear to God and each other, render our duty towards Him, our neighbour, and ourselves, so extremely evident; Sin (the thing that wise men dread, and "fools make a mock at") must be the reverse of all this plain truth; it is acting in direct opposition to all this evidence, to all the maxims of discretion, to all the principles of real self-love. And the effects of it upon the mind, must be the same as those

of distempers upon the body: the mischiefs of it in the rational world, must exactly answer to those of irregular, disordered motion, in the natural one.

The first of these effects is compunction, or uneasy regret: I mean, where we have any consideration remaining, any thing like reflection, upon ourselves and our conduct. For I will leave no room to introduce that poor objection, that "Some people can live without all remorse, and can die as hardened as they lived." Prudence results from thought. It is no more impossible for a man to sin himself into a stupid disregard of himself, than to stop his ears, or to put out his eyes. But still, I hope, the light is pleasant to behold: and deafness, surely, is some inconvenience. And as you cannot avoid seeing an ugly as well as a beautiful object, if you will turn your eye upon it; as you must hear discord as well as harmony, if you let your ear be open to it; so necessarily will you have a sense of guilt in your mind, whenever you allow yourself to take a view of its unbecoming actions and qualities.

You cannot even perceive any thing external to you, that is disproportioned, or deformed;



deformed; but it always gives you disgust and aversion, mixed with pity. What then must you feel, when you see this to be the case of your very self? When your own reason convicts you, of having abused that reason: when you look for something in yourself, agreeable and pleasing; and can find nothing but what is violent, distorted, and confused: when you look for the features and characters of a man, and see nothing left above the passions, above the blind instincts, of a brute? What creature can stand the shock of this reflection? Or what pains, what blushes, can equal those, which arise from a remembrance of the injury and disgrace you have done to your own nature? Such is every vicious man's fate: to be condemned at home, though he were sure never to be arraigned at the bar of any foreign judge. For had he no other law, he is a law to himself.

2. Therefore another property inseparable from vice, in the light wherein I am now surveying it, is its absolute inexcusableness, on account of that internal provision which is made, to secure us from it. For, as we may be drawn into it by many temptations; so, on the other hand, we are fortified

fortified against it, as well as enabled to recover ourselves out of it, by the innate powers and suggestions of our own minds. Our reason directs us to truth and justice: our natural taste leads us to admire the beauty, to speak the praises, of sobriety and virtue. And whenever we consider ourselves, as transgressing our due bounds; every passion we have, strives and struggles to call us back. Our shame and our fear foretell the danger, and point out the just consequences of such a state. In one word---It is as natural for you to repent, when you do think; as it is to sin, when you do not.

What then can be pleaded on such a creature's behalf, if he continues obstinate in error, rejecting the counsel of his own heart and conscience! If he loves to walk in darkness, while a candle is set up in the midst of him! "The spirit of man, is the candle of the Lord." It follows from all which has been said, that "If virtue be the law of human nature, and vice the guilty breach of this law; then the one must be also the law of God, and the other a criminal violation of his sovereign Will." For how can any thing



thing be a law of Nature, without being enacted by the great Author of Nature? Or how can goodness be the excellence, wickedness the depravity, of all reasonable Beings; and yet bear no respect to the approbation or displeasure of Him, whose Will is the most perfect reason?

This inference gives you a still more complete definition of vice. --- "As it is an offence against the law of a man's own mind, and the welfare of his person; so is it an equal offence against the kindness and mercy, an insult upon the authority and providence, of the supreme Lawgiver." And if you take revelation, or christianity, into the reckoning, you will then indeed see the truth of St. Paul's words; and "Sin will appear exceeding sinful."

4. The last consequence therefore of a profligate life is, that "God will and must revenge, or punish, it; that He, who is the Governor, as well as the Creator, of moral, free agents, will assuredly demand an account, to what uses they have applied the faculties He has bestowed upon them; and that the same Divine Wisdom, which has given us wholesome rules, which has

"blest

blest us with the knowledge of his Laws, will finally vindicate his own honour, and the honour of his government. Wherefore, in few words, all you get by supposing, that Infinite Justice does not distribute rewards equal to the brave, steady, injured virtue, of some men; nor vengeance adequate to the provocations and impiety of others, in the present life---is only "a more certain demonstration, that it will be effectually done in another state."

III. You need not be told that my design has been, to lay open the very source, to shew you the radical, fundamental evil, of all sinful practices; as they are a deviation from the indispensable Law, by which every reasonable creature should conduct himself. And I have attempted this chiefly, for the sake of those persons, whom no christian arguments can move; with whom scripture may have little weight, because little studied or considered by them. Now if such people will only reflect upon the dignity of their nature; upon their character and reputation;---if they will consult their health, their peace, and proper self-enjoyment;---they will immediately see, that temperance and righteousness are the only



ly preservatives of these invaluable blessings; that debauchery and iniquity are the infallible ruin of them all; and that true humanity would debar us from wickedness, though Christ had never delivered a single precept about it.

But if mens habits of sensuality are so predominant, that this original argument can lay no hold on them; if they will neither cast an eye of pity upon themselves, nor look up to Him, "who hath taught them more than the beasts of the field, and made them wiser than the fowls of heaven;"---Christianity will be urged in vain, where Reason has lost her influence: the life and doctrine, the death and example, of the Son of God, will avail nothing with them, who have no belief of God himself.

The whole must be left to the decision of that important day, which will abundantly discover the wisdom, or the folly, of what we have here been thinking and doing---when God, who created the world, will judge it with equity, and recompense every man according to his works.

To Him be glory!

# SERMON XIII.

**T**HE words which I have here read to you, carry in them such greatness of soul, such an elevation of spirit, that who ever can truly feel their contents, that self, is arrived at the summit of philosophy, and may justly claim the appellation, not only of a wise man, but of a wise Christian.

It is the common maxim of worldly wisdom, "to cherish, and if possible to obtain, that station in life, which will most conduce to the passing our days with ease and independence." But the present state of things, in innumerable cases, will allow



## S E R M O N XIII.

PHILIPPIANS iv. 12.

*Every where and in all things I am instructed,  
both to be full and to be hungry, both to  
abound and to suffer need.*

**T**HE words which I have here read to you, carry in them such a greatness of soul, such an elevation of spirit; that whoever can truly speak them concerning himself, is arrived at the summit of philosophy; and may justly claim the appellation, not only of a wise man, but of a real Christian.

It is the common maxim of worldly wisdom, "to choose, and if possible to obtain, that situation in life, which will most conduce to the passing our days with ease and independence." But the present state of things, in innumerable cases, will allow

us no room to exercise such a choice. The universal Providence has suited the variety of our present fortunes, to the several virtues, which He intended should be cultivated and promoted by them. So that men, even Christians, are obliged to take the world, not always as they could wish it, but as they find it.

Here therefore our Philosophy and Religion are to shew themselves. This is the field, wherein the Gospel is to display its peculiar power, its noble influence upon the human mind; by teaching us what is exemplified in the conduct of the great Christian Philosopher, and is expressed by him in the text:---namely, ‘the heavenly art of being contented, of acting uniformly well, under all the changes and chances of this mortal life, whether in plenty or in poverty, in prosperity or adversity:’---the divine science of “knowing both how to be full and to be hungry, how to abound and to suffer need.”

My method of treating this useful, this important subject, shall be comprised in two articles.

I. I will describe the virtue of contentment, and inform you who is properly the contented man.

II. I will



II. I will offer some suitable and affecting arguments, that may engage your endeavours to attain so excellent a quality.

I. This duty like several others, is liable to be mistaken by many persons, in whom there appears either a weak head, or (which as often happens) a bad heart. Most people profess themselves contented, but few are really so.---Give me leave then, to state it rightly; by clearing away the errors, and settling the just notion of it.

True contentment is not a stubborn, hardy unconcern, at the event of things; nor a stupid indifference, about whatever may befall us in life. It is not grounded on any principle of fate or predestination; on any belief that good and evil, riches and poverty, pleasure and pain, are irrevocably doomed and fixed upon any man, by an arbitrary Will or appointment of Heaven: so as that it should be the part of a wise man to acquiesce in his destiny, merely because he cannot alter it; and to scorn complaining, only because he cannot help himself. No! Philosophy does not pretend to take away our senses, or to deprive us of all feeling; but to support us, beyond any thing, under what we do  
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feel; to instruct us in a prudent and becoming behaviour; under what we enjoy; to lighten our afflictions, with the comforts of reason and wisdom; to regulate our pleasures, by the maxims of duty and discretion.

This amiable virtue therefore is founded on a pious and rational apprehension of God, the supreme, universal Governor; on a sense of his justice and righteousness, in ordaining or permitting the various gradations, the promiscuous turns, of good and evil, throughout our present life; and on a serious conviction of the several duties incumbent upon us, under such or such circumstances. Let me say it in a word! He alone is religiously contented with his station, who duly weighs the nature of that station, and duly performs the offices that belong to it.

This definition will hold good, in whatever light you can view a person, in whatever character, or post, you can assign him. If you take the man of wealth, or fortune; when, and on what account, may he be deemed truly contented? Not surely because you do not hear him utter any direct complaints; no not though perhaps you hear him declare "he is perfectly satisfied with his



"his condition:" for a shame it would be indeed, if he should declare otherwise! But yet, if this creature is still inwardly craving, and eagerly striving to get more, while he makes no good or wise improvement of what he has already; how can he possibly be stiled the contented man? A coward may as well claim the command of an army, or an idiot the government of a kingdom, as such a one can pretend to St. Paul's great art, of governing himself---of "knowing how to be full, and how to abound!"

Whereas if you see this same man, generously employing the plenty, he is blest with: if he remembers the ends, for which it was given him; that he is but a steward of these good things; that a day is coming, wherein God, "from whom all good things descend," will call upon him to "give an account of his stewardship:"---if he thinks, as he ought, on that awful day of reckoning; what benefits he has conferred; what wants he has relieved; what hearts he has comforted; what delight he has taken in being "a father of the fatherless, and a helper of the friendless;"---then is he truly contented; truly thankful to the great Donor; truly happy in himself, by his care to make others so.

Take next the case of the Poor, into a similar examination. And when can a man of this class, be pronounced religiously contented? When does he shew himself "instructed," like the Apostle, "how to be hungry, and to suffer need?" Not when he sits him down in the stoical mood of sulky resolution, to bear what he supposes to come by necessity, to be inflicted upon him by a blind, irreverfible decree:---which, if it can be called contentment, is a foolish and even a wicked one. It has all the ill-nature, that a fictitious virtue can be conceived to have; without a single comfort, that accrues from the exercise of genuine piety. Such a person may be said, if you please, to endure his condition; but by no means to be contented with it.

Whereas, imagine this poor man lifting up his eyes and his heart to his Maker, with a chearful reliance upon that almighty Power, which ordereth all things for the best:---and see on what a solid, a never-failing principle, his contentment is established! See how many circumstances there are, that render it a real virtue! He now considers the wise purposes, for which Heaven allotted him this situation. He reflects upon the work he must perform, upon the duties he must discharge, in it.

Thus



Thus he becomes honest, industrious, useful to his country, a faithful subject to his King, a faithful servant to his God. Whenever he feels the want of what others enjoy; he presently takes refuge, where the pious Psalmist did before him----“The Lord is my shepherd: therefore I shall” (finally) “lack nothing.” If he be sometimes pressed with hunger, or thirst; he can easily bear it, when he calls to mind that same heavenly shepherd, who will one day “feed him in the green pastures, and lead him forth beside the waters of comfort.”

II. Having made these short remarks upon the nature of this admirable virtue; let us attend a while to the arguments, that should engage us in the practice of it. And these I shall adapt to the different persons and characters, which more immediately require them.

The studying for reasons, that will persuade a man to be easy with an ample revenue, with a vast flow of riches about him; may seem a very needless labour, a very impertinent undertaking. And so indeed it would be, if all who “spend their days in wealth,” were duly “instructed how to abound”---how to bestow their abundance wisely

wisely, and to be happy in such a conduct.

But, alas! How perpetually do we find the contrary! Extravagant fancies, raging desires, unbounded ambition, are so frequently the attendants of high fortunes, that they turn plenty itself into a mere cheat, and a snare; destroying the felicity it pretends to give, and really ought to give. Those passions are insatiable. The ocean itself can hardly fill a selfish imagination, or quench a lust of riches. And the only blessing (I should rather have said the certain curse) which some men receive from possessing a great deal, is "to be everlastingly hungry and thirsting after more."

Hence comes to pass (what you all well know) that "there is many a restless, aching heart, that lives in a splendid house; many a discontented soul, dwelling in the lofty palace, that is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermillion."

Well then! What are the arguments, which these opulent wretches stand in need of? Why, such as will convince them (if that can be done) "what a folly, what a delusion it is, to place happiness in things, and not in the right use of things:" what an insult  
moreover



moreover it is upon the divine bounty, thus to pervert its fairest and choicest temporal gifts; by a just application whereof, they have the noblest opportunities of glorifying the infinite Benefactor, of diffusing blessings among their fellow-creatures, of gaining to themselves universal esteem, love, and veneration!

A state of poverty has a thousand considerations to raise compassion in every humane breast, towards a man's repinings and discontent; and Charity will readily provide a cloak, to hide the failings and uneasinesses of the distressed. But "to be full and abound," and yet not to be chearful, generous, communicative, and benevolent (which are the best, the only signs, of real content) this is a deformity, a baseness of soul, which the kindest hand, the tenderest heart, can find no mantle to cover or conceal. This is that "fore evil under the sun," which Solomon described so long ago: "Riches, kept by the owners thereof, to their hurt"----riches, that yield no contentment, because they do no good---plenty, the abuse of which generally causes wise men to despise us, and the righteous God most assuredly to revenge and punish us.

Wherefore, leaving this tribe of people to their own deserved disquietudes, let me turn your attention once more upon the poor and the afflicted. By which two words (the Poor and the Afflicted) I do not mean any of those persons, who through idleness, negligence, vanity, or debauchery, have reduced themselves to beggary. No! They, to their patience and contentment, must add sincere repentance; without which, their contentment will do them but little service. In truth, a man poor by luxurious extravagance, must first grow sober and virtuous, before ever he can grow contented under his poverty.

My arguments therefore are pointed at those sufferers only, whom not their own evil habits, but the course of providence, or unkind accidents, have subjected to that hard lot. And, blessed be God, hard as it may appear, true religion affords you many comforts, that will greatly help to soften it. But the time obliges me to collect them all, under one general head.

Always bear in mind what, according to christianity, to all sound philosophy, is the main end of human life. Remember that we were sent into the present world, not on purpose



purpose either to be high or low, rich or poor, hot, designedly, either to undergo misery, or to feast upon temporal pleasures; but to be, all of us, by wise and various methods, trained up in the several moral graces, which alone can qualify us for a spiritual, superior state. Every condition upon earth therefore, has its scenes of trial and temptation, adapted to the exercise of its respective virtues. The rich are no more exempted from them, than the poorest man amongst you!

Look upon the world: view it in the light, wherein experience shews it, and the holy scriptures have described it. It is a state of pilgrimage, and of warfare. We are all travellers: what wonder then, if you meet with some rough, or foul ways! We are soldiers: and what soldier should think much, to encounter some dangers, or to receive some wounds, for the sake of his king, and his country? But what country can be named with that, to which you are travelling, and for which you are fighting--“The heavenly Canaan, the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God---where all your warfare shall be accomplished---where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and the weary shall be at rest.”

Again:

Again: Whenever you are enumerating your wants, be sure not to forget the many blessings which, in all probability, you at the same time possess. Put these into the opposite scale: and see whether the balance will not incline to a tolerable degree of contentment. For example: You may want this or that convenience, this or that accommodation of life: but then perhaps the defect is supplied, by health of body, and peace of mind; by the freedom of your person, and the free profession of your religious principles: by those blessings, that many an honest creature, many a valuable servant of Christ, would give the world for; and which oftentimes cannot be purchased with the finest estate, or the gentlest fortunes.

But further: Allowing you may labour under outward distress, under sickness of body, or any present troubles: yet, if you retain a fair character, and an upright conscience, you have that in your own power, within your own breast, which will cause you to rejoice in affliction: and what, if you are wise, you would not exchange for all the gold of Ophir.

Let me mention another case: If Death has taken



taken away your friends ; call to mind the Saviour, who has declared Himself your friend, " if ye do whatsoever He commandeth you : " who " has laid down his life for you : " who " will never leave you, nor forsake you : " who is as powerful, as he is good : " the same " yesterday, to-day, and for ever, "

Moreover still : Whenever your desire of advancing yourself in the world (that universal infirmity, from the beggar to the throne) when this desire, I say, is urgent upon you, consider the hazard, which frequently attends a change in mens fortunes. Consult your own temper : recollect how many beside yourself, are known to have grasped at the very thing, that has proved their ruin ; and have sunk the lower, only by having been raised the higher.

Before ever any one fixes his heart upon this emolument, or that employment ; upon the honour, or affluence, to which he sees another man exalted ; he should be well assured, that his spirit and his conduct would suit the alteration he so fondly wishes. For it is a very dubious matter, whether your becoming a wealthier man, might not occasion you to become a much worse Christian.

Once

Once more: Should you ever be transported  
 by what you term adversity, to utter any re-  
 monstrances against your Maker, or his deal-  
 ings with you; forbear a while, and let your  
 passion cool! Call to remembrance your own  
 numerous failings, neglects, transgressions:  
 and see if, upon a fair calculation, though  
 you may be less favoured than some others,  
 you have not yet abundantly more than you can  
 pretend to deserve. Look up to the God, with  
 whose dispensations you so daringly find fault.  
 Think how few of you would be able to  
 stand before Him, should He be! "extreme  
 to mark what you do amiss!"  
 Finally, let no one, not even the most  
 innocent sufferer, imagine that his own is a  
 singular case; but let him turn his eye to the  
 numberless examples of those fellow sufferers,  
 who have gone before him upon earth, and  
 are now rewarded in Heaven. What Pro-  
 phet, what Apostle, what eminent Saint, but  
 has been tried and purified in the furnace of  
 affliction? What Saint, did I say? Nay,  
 what was the "King of Saints," the blessed  
 Jesus himself, but "a man of sorrows and ac-  
 quainted with grief;" who "had not where  
 to lay his head;" who patiently endured  
 this



this severest poverty, "that by it He might,  
"at last, make you rich?"

To sum up the whole: Take with you the words of our persecuted Apostle, and learn from them the great duty which He practised, and I have been recommending. Estimate all your worldly difficulties, or disasters, by his rule; and then, like Him, live in contentment, and die in peace. Reckon, with Him, that "Your sufferings of this present  
"time, are not worthy to be compared with  
"the glory, which shall be revealed in you;" ---that "your light affliction, which is but  
"for a moment, will work for you a far more  
"exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

To God, only wise--





## S E R M O N XIV.

*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work; pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,*

**R**IGHT and worthy apprehensions concerning the Deity, are the foundation of all rational worship, of all duty towards Him. And the standing test of any religion, as to its preference above others, ought to be this---that 'It teaches what is more agreeable to his divine nature, that it speaks more respectfully about his attributes and government.'

When we consider Almighty God, as the ruler and judge of the moral world; the attribute that most obviously strikes our thoughts,

is his distributive justice ; his perfect impartiality, in dispensing his favours ; his rewards of virtue, his punishments of vice ; his immutable regard to the respective situations, characters, and conduct, of his intelligent subjects.

In disposing the blessings of the present life, the universal providence has wisely made a great variety ; for trying and improving different minds, for promoting the several moral and religious virtues ; which, like so many concurring roads, all lead us to the same point, to the same noble end of felicity and perfection.

Here therefore men have been apt to fall into dangerous mistakes, in their reasonings and conclusions. By what God bestows of blessings external, they would estimate his internal favour. From the different measures of temporal or spiritual advantages, which He affords them in one world ; they would with certainty infer the privileges and happiness of a future one.

Thus the narrow-minded Jew, by misinterpreting the promises made to Abraham, would exclude every creature but himself and his countrymen, from all hope in the kingdom  
of



of heaven. So some Christians would perversely magnify the grace of the Gospel, by confining all the mercies of God, all that Christ has done and suffered for mankind, within their own diminutive community. And other Christians, still more fond of a partial religion, delude themselves with an imagination, that, by a capricious, arbitrary appointment of Heaven, very few in any community, though they diligently seek to enter the gate of salvation, will be able to gain admittance.

Against all these errors the holy Scriptures are exceedingly plain, and have made the amplest provision. The words in particular which I have now read to you, are most pertinent, as well as explicit. Therefore, that you may the more fully understand their purport and importance; I will,

I. Remark to you the principal instances of God's dealings with mankind, wherein He has proved himself a righteous, impartial Governor. And as I go along, I shall endeavour to remove the several difficulties, or objections, which some people may fancy lie in the way of this grand Truth. Having thus established the doctrine itself, I will,

H. Direct your thoughts to the application, which every Christian should make of it, for regulating his judgment and practice.

I. then : All God's dispensations, and his whole providence towards us, whether towards particular persons, or towards nations of men, may be comprehended under these three articles.

1. His distribution of the goods or evils, the enjoyments or sufferings, which we experience in this present life.

2. The several degrees of light, knowledge, and religious instruction, which He has vouchsafed to mankind.

3. The manner wherein He will confer the rewards and punishments of a future state.----In each of these articles I am to shew you, that the all-wise Creator is no partial ruler of his creatures ; or, as the Scripture expresses it, that He is "no respecter of persons."

1. When we survey the temporal blessings of life, we observe a great diversity, and very remarkable distinctions---distinctions not so properly said to be made, as allowed to be made, by the divine providence. It is chiefly men themselves, that cause the wide disproportion



portions in the outward circumstances of their lives. For if all men, or but the generality, would be industrious, sober, honest, and tolerably contented; though some might acquire a good deal more than others, from their superior abilities, or turn for business; yet very few would wish to have extravagantly too much, and hardly any would be found to want.

But so it is! Men are not what they should be! and God allows us to create these external differences, in our worldly affairs. All are not equally rich, easy, or independent. The superiority in these matters, falls to many, without any due pretension of qualification or desert: as, if money be scattered amongst a greedy, gaping croud; some will get ten times more than their share, others go away empty. The case is the same with regard to honours, preeminence, preferments: the proud and the vain are often lifted up, while the humble and the wise are kept low.

Yet is all this permitted, not without the perfect knowledge, and providential foresight, of Heaven. Since hereby room is given for the exercise of all the virtues that belong to our human state, and that tend in several

Q<sup>a</sup>

ways

ways to adorn our nature. Hence are promoted the virtues of benignity, compassion, and liberality, in some: those of patience, contentment, and pious resignation to the divine Will, in others. Every man is shewn his duty, by the post assigned him; and is taught to look up towards his Maker, by what he finds among his fellow-creatures.

Present fortunes are not bestowed as an absolute gift, but as a talent, as a trust; upon their conscientious improvement, or abuse of which, depends the final happiness or misery of the wealthy and powerful. Nor is poverty a mark of God's hatred, or ill-will, towards the poor man. No! It is the means God has appointed him, whereby he may rise at last to a level with the best of his splendid neighbours; and infinitely surpass the worst of them, in all real, durable felicity.

So then, though there be a difference of condition, there is no partiality; though there be a transient inequality of rank and figure, there is no respect of persons. On the contrary, as I hinted to you just now, our noblest actions and affections, draw their origin, derive their very Being, from this wise disposal. Pity, beneficence, with every  
instance



instance of charity, public as well as private, are founded altogether upon the indigence of some, and the affluence of others. These virtues could have no place, if all men lived in prosperity and opulence---The whole would be a mere round of stupid self-enjoyment---There could be no possible exertion of the generous principle.

2. God Almighty appears, beyond contradiction, a good, an impartial governor over mankind, with respect to the several degrees of light, of religious knowledge or instruction, which He has bestowed on several people, in sundry times and manners.

If you consider the vast, unbounded extent of the Universe; variety in the qualities and circumstances, in the faculties and abilities of creatures, is what consummates the harmony of the creation, what gives it full beauty and glory. Whatever any rational Being is, or has, or can enjoy; springs from the free bounty, from the pure good pleasure, of the supreme Maker and Benefactor. All have cause, and infinite obligation, to be thankful. And for any one to complain, by invidiously comparing himself, or his own powers, with other creatures placed above him, would be

the most criminal ingratitude ! Reason alone, even the lowest portion of it, is an excellence far transcending whatever can be found in the sun, or moon, or in all the inanimate "starry" host of heaven." Of this divine gift, indeed, we see a considerable variety in different men. Yet God is partial to none. Every one is blest with what he could have no possible claim to, and for which he can never sufficiently glorify the kind Author of his existence.

Now the same argument is equally applicable to the distribution of religious or revealed knowledge, as to the natural gift of reason and understanding. God may surely dispense the one as well as the other, in times and measures, of which He alone is the proper judge. Whenever men have clouded and depraved their reason (the inward rule of their moral conduct) God can be under no obligation to confer upon such creatures any new or additional light. Wheresoever, or upon whomsoever, He may at any time bestow it, it is an entirely free grace ; to which as no one can plead the least right, so no one, without the highest presumption, can complain for want of such a favour.

Yet



Yet has the great God been super-abundant, in this undeserved mercy towards the sons of men ! No sooner had man " corrupted his " ways before God," and darkened the road to his true happiness ; but a Saviour was promised , who should re-instruct, convert, and redeem him. The Patriarchs, and their descendants the Jews, received the first notices of this gracious design. They were made the keepers of divine oracles ; that they might preserve the knowledge and worship of the true God, till the full season should arrive, for the happy manifestation of the Gospel to the world at large, as the several nations were found qualified to embrace and entertain it.

Here now was no partiality shewn, to the Jewish People. They were only the storehouse of good things, for their fellow-creatures. They were neither spiritual nor temporal favourites, above other nations. God subjected them, in the main, to the same righteous law of providence, with which He visited the rest. He gave his blessing to their virtues ; but utterly discarded them at last, for their incorrigible vices and infidelity.

When the light of Christianity arose, it was diffused with no sparing or partial hand.

Only a few years had passed, before the principal quarters of the then known world, enjoyed the inestimable benefits of its instruction.--- We are apt, with concern, or perhaps by way of objection, to inquire, 'Why, from what malignant causes, this heavenly light is so wretchedly smothered, so almost entirely lost, in many large and famous countries,' If we might judge of all, by what we know has been the case with some; God would easily be acquitted, and men themselves would alone be answerable for the great defect.

Take the following specimen. Those extensive dominions, now the Turkish empire, were once the grand, the glorious scene, of Christ's religion. The seven Churches of Asia are mentioned only as particular, nay smaller instances, of its early success in those wide regions. Would you be informed what it was, that sunk them into their present degenerate state, of Mahometan ignorance and imposture? Read the three first chapters of St. John's Revelation, with a short train of succeeding history: and you will quickly find that it was, that it could be, nothing but their own impious heresies, their unchristian quarrels and divisions, their cruelties and debauch,



debaucheries, which deprived those Eastern Christians of their faith, quenched their light, and “ removed even the candlestick from them.”

Carry your inquiry further down, into our Western, European quarters, of the globe. Ask, whence these mists of error, superstition, and the blackest idolatry; which for so many ages have deformed the face of the christian church? See the prophecies, the beginnings, the progress, of this mournful change, in that noble and valuable book abovementioned: the very particulars, how, where, and by whom, it should be brought to pass! It is nothing more, than what was precisely foreknown, foretold, and justly permitted; what could not be prevented, without a perpetual miracle; without a violent, unnatural restraint, upon the minds and free-will of christian people.

God has done every thing on his part, for preserving all these nations in his true faith and worship. They who, by corrupting or departing from that faith, have occasioned the loss of it, must bear the guilt, as well as the penalty. And I may safely venture to affirm, that the express warnings mercifully given of this notorious Apostacy; its distinguishing characters,

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characters, most clearly drawn by the inspired Writers of the New Testament, so many hundred years before its birth; with the exact accomplishment of these predictions, in the ages already past;---do as fully demonstrate the truth of the Christian Revelation, as any argument can demonstrate any truth whatsoever.

Thus has the supreme Governor been good to all men, and partial to none, in the proportions of natural light, as well as of revealed knowledge, which he has vouchsafed to them. All have received much more, than they could pretend to merit: many have ungratefully forfeited, what they might still have possessed and enjoyed.

3. But God will complete this his adorable moral character, by the manner in which He will finally judge the world at large, and every single member of it.

This future judgment is the capital point, wherein the Scriptures declare the universal Ruler, to be free from all partiality, or "respect of persons." When the several better or worse situations, men were placed in, the many or few talents, whether of nature or of grace, committed to them; the higher  
OF



or lower abilities ; the advantages, or infirmities ; the temptations or necessities, under which they have been laid, during the present life ; shall all be “ weighed in an even balance ;” and the behaviour of every man, throughout these various connections and relations, be weighed along with them ; and a reward or punishment be proportioned to each, without exception, but with every allowance that mercy, directed by necessary justice, can grant. When integrity of heart, and sincerity of endeavours, shall be the sole rule of God’s love, both towards the highest and the lowest. When mere outward privileges, will nought avail ; nor unavoidable ignorance, or invincible prejudice, be made the least article of accusation, against Jew or Gentile, against Mahometan, Infidel, or Christian. But, as St. Peter here says, “ every man’s work,” his power to work, and even his good-will to work, in the station of life allotted him by Providence, or his wilful neglect to do that work, are the only considerations, which shall determine his sentence, and decide his fate. When, in brief, the riches of this world shall have no pre-eminence, nor its short-lived honours any distinction.

distinction: nation, birth, and family, shall be of no signification: habitual virtue, wherever it appears, shall suffer no abatement of its full price; nor unrepented vice find the least shelter. The man who, with his affluent fortune, generously relieves the saints, the poor, the persecuted, and the true prophet; shall receive a prophet's reward: while the good soul, that has no more than a cup of cold water to give, nothing but one poor mite to cast into God's kingdom in the Name of God and of Christ, shall in no wise lose his reward.

Thus do we understand that "God governs, and will judge, the world in righteousness;" agreeably to the sense of the text, which I have hitherto been explaining; as well as of numberless other passages, throughout the Holy Scriptures. I shall conclude for the present, with reciting to you a few of them, that are most express and affectionate. "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. He accepteth not the persons of Princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor: for they are all the work of his hands. As many as have sinned without law, shall also



“also perish without law: and as many as  
 “have sinned in the law, shall be judged by  
 “the law. There is no difference between  
 “the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord  
 “over all, is rich unto all that call upon Him.  
 “God is no respecter of persons: but in  
 “every nation, he that feareth Him, and  
 “worketh righteousness, is accepted with  
 “Him.” And the admirable Author, who  
 wrote the Book of Wisdom, is worthy to  
 close the whole. “He that is Lord of all,  
 “shall fear no man’s person; neither shall  
 “He stand in awe of any man’s greatness:  
 “for he hath made both small and great, and  
 “careth for all alike.”

Behold! I have set before you a truth, of  
 the utmost plainness, certainty, and impor-  
 tance. The practical uses to which we should  
 all apply it, in our several characters, pro-  
 fessions, and callings, will afford sufficient  
 matter for another discourse.

To the King Eternal---

and the world without law; and as many as  
have turned to the law, shall be judged by  
the law. There is no difference between

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... mentioned were  
... the  
... J. R. MONROE



## S E R M O N XV.

I PETER i. 17.

*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work; pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.*

AS these words, with many similar passages of holy Scripture, uniformly represent Almighty God (the God who created us, the supreme Father whom we call upon and adore) as an impartial benefactor, governor, and judge, over all his rational creatures; I have, accordingly, set before you the principal instances, or relations, wherein He plainly appears to answer this amiable character, in his dealings with mankind,

The instances I mentioned, were, First, his distribution of the goods or evils, the blessings

blessings or afflictions, which we experience in the present life : Secondly, the several degrees of light, knowledge, and religious instruction, which He has, at different times, vouchsafed to individuals, or to nations at large : Thirdly, and especially, the manner wherein He will dispense the rewards, as well as punishments, of the future state.

In going through each of these divisions, I endeavoured to obviate such doubts, or inquiries, as many persons may captiously raise, by way of objection, against this great and fundamental doctrine.

Now the certainty of this important article in our creed, will fix itself upon every considerate mind, not only from the whole tenor of Scripture, but from our own clearest notions concerning the Deity and his attributes; as an all-wise, a perfectly good, an omnipotent Ruler, of mankind. For though a Creator and Governor of moral subjects, may, consistently with all these qualities, confer what original powers, what natural endowments, or what additional, super-natural-favours, upon each of his works, He pleases; and in what measures He thinks fit, amidst an unlimited variety of dependant Beings; yet to bestow these



these bounties from mere partiality, or “re-  
spect of persons,” all utterly void of any  
claim, all totally incapable of any pretensions,  
to such a distinction ;---this, I say, is to act  
without due knowledge ; and falls infinitely  
below the character of true wisdom. Because  
Wisdom always looks both upon things and  
persons, as they are ; with an aspect open,  
free, indifferent ; and cannot possibly give a  
preference of approbation, or love, where she  
finds no ground for it. Every work of God,  
in its natural place and use, is equally ap-  
proved by Him.

Then again ; with relation to the behaviour  
of his rational creatures ; God can never so  
partially regard the superior virtues of Some  
(founded on the improvement of superior ta-  
lents originally bestowed) as to overlook or  
despise the lower abilities of Others, who  
serve and honour Him with the same integrity  
of heart, with the same pious ardency of de-  
sire. Real goodness is ever pleasing to the  
Fountain of goodness, in every shape, in every  
degree. The power by which we do any thing  
right and good, is derived from Him: the sincere  
Will with which we do it, in every proportion  
whatsoever, cannot but be acceptable to Him.

Finally; God's Majesty, his universal Sovereignty, sets Him at the remotest distance from every suspicion of partiality. All are equally inferior to Him: all are alike dependent upon Him. As He therefore, who possesses all things, can want no favour; so He that is wise, will wisely confer his favour; and He that is supremely good, will bestow it upon all who dutifully endeavour to deserve it—according as their respective faculties, and their honest use of those faculties, be they greater or smaller, may qualify and fit them for it.

Thus does our very notion of God, confirm what God has uniformly declared concerning Himself; namely, that “Though in his original creation, or in his general providence, He does not give to all men an equal share of riches, grace, understanding, knowledge, or religious advantages; yet He really gives to all men great blessings and bounties; which if they will employ as they ought, He will appear in his future rewards, to be, beyond the merits, beyond the hopes or imaginations of all, rich unto all that call upon Him.”

II. Let me now lay before you the several instructive, practical lessons, that are the proper



proper application of the doctrine I have been establishing?—which application is contained in the concluding words of the Text. If such be the God, the Almighty Father, whom you worship and adore; pass the time of your sojourning here upon earth, in fear—in fear of entertaining any unworthy thoughts concerning your Maker; any low, false opinion, concerning his righteous dispensations—in fear of doing any thing unbecoming those, who are taught to think justly, about the divine nature and perfections. I, then; “The sense of God’s impartial dealings with his moral creatures, ought to prevent, or to cure in us, all hasty, rash conclusions, respecting the spiritual and final condition of any men whatever.” In this point, the Jewish People were notoriously uncharitable: they arrogated all divine favour to themselves. Christians, of every denomination, commonly cherish very high conceits, touching their own spiritual privileges. If they would only take care to walk worthy of the blessings, they severally enjoy; and consider their fellow-creatures, as being in the hands of the same merciful, beneficent Creator; all would be well! But to fancy that the rest of

the world is lost, because you are saved; that other people have no talents, no graces, no means of "working out any salvation," because you are blest with many talents, and large graces; this is to imagine what God hath never spoken, what neither Christ nor his Apostles ever taught mankind.

"He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved: and he that believeth not, shall be damned;" say the holy Scriptures. But these same Scriptures, in conjunction with all common sense, understand this concerning such unbelievers only, as, having the gospel fairly proposed to them, wilfully refused it. And even among those who did refuse it, we are no exact judges, by what inveterate prejudices, by what powerful impressions of education, Many might be almost invincibly hindered from embracing it.

Again; The poor Heathen, who never once heard about a Saviour, and lives in a total, an unavoidable ignorance, of all revealed law; even he is not "left without law." As a man, God has given him Reason; God's own law and light within him, And so far as he follows or disobeys it, he is following or disobeying the God of reason, and shall be acquitted or condemned accordingly.

Lastly;



Lastly; the present, and all the later Jews, whose infidelity is more unhappy than criminal; They have a revealed moral law; which as they observe or transgress, they will stand or fall; when the world shall be judged by that "God of mercies," who "accepteth every man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not."

Since God then is thus a Father to All, whether within or without the limits of his covenanted Church; let your sentiments be generous and tender, towards all mankind. Nor ever doubt but that, "in his house, there are many mansions;" abodes furnished with suitable degrees of happiness for every creature, who does not obstinately shut his eyes against the light that is afforded him, and does not "sin from malicious wickedness."

But above all, let a Christian be ashamed to confess, that "God regardeth no man's person;" and yet maintain, that "the final happiness of his Gospel, by a dark tyrannical decree, has from eternity been destined for a few select favourites only; though All have had the same open promise of it, the same gracious invitation to it."

Dare you say of your Saviour (the worst thing you can possibly say of Him) that He died for all; has given the same laws; required the same conditions; laid the same glorious rewards, the same terrible punishments, before all Christians alike; and yet will arbitrarily sentence the vast majority of these wretched souls to endless misery, after thus solemnly deluding them, in his own sacred word, by pretended offers of heaven and happiness? You cannot surely think such a doctrine consistent with "God's judging according to every man's work," or with any other moral and religious principle!

2. "The divine universal justice, will teach every man a rule, whereby he may examine himself, and his spiritual condition; may regulate his expectations, and fears, about it."----Look upon yourself, and remember that there is nothing in your person, to which the most high God has either respect or dislike. Your temper, your actions, your good or bad qualities, are the sole objects of his regard. Do you find that justice, humility, benevolence, temperance and charity, bear the chief command over you? Why, by these fruits of God's Spirit, you ought



sought to be assured of his favour, and to comfort yourself with every good hope.

On the contrary; do lust, censoriousness, or revenge, still keep their hold in you; along with, perhaps, a scrupulous observance of many exterior, formal duties? Let them, who know not the heart, judge as they can!

“God is not to be mocked. He is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things.”

Or further; have you laboured under a guilty conscience, under even heinous and repeated crimes; but are come to a serious conviction of their folly, to an hearty sorrow for them, to a sedate resolution that you will avoid them through your whole remaining life? Then let no despair find entrance into your troubled breast. Remember once more, to your unspeakable consolation, that it is not your person which God hateth, but your vices. Only conquer them, and nothing shall debar you from the reward of your victory. If you “return to what is lawful and right,” never fear but “the soul will be saved alive.” You may read your success in what was said to probably a wicked man than yourself. “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” are God’s own

words to Cain, one of the first and most criminal transgressors. Presumption therefore in any man, and despair in a repenting man, are Both an equal forgetfulness, that "God is no respecter of persons." Let God's impartiality in his dealings with us, continually caution us against all partial regards, in our behaviour towards each other."---I do not mean, that you should cast off all the outward respect, due to different ranks and offices; or the inward and profounder reverence, due to superior personal merit. No! What I would condemn is, 'The fond, the foolish estimate, we often make of men, from merely superficial, external circumstances; and the low idea too commonly conceived of those, who possess every recommendation, except that of worldly figure and advantages.' People of unimproved, or ill-instructed minds, measure their regard to every person, by his fortune, not by his virtue. If you be rich, or in power; you shall have gross flattery, false and fulsome panegyrics, heaped upon you. Are you poor, and in mean life; though ever so knowing, or so deserving? You will, very probably, be unnoticed by most: by  
many



many you will be trampled on and contemned.

If we would take the great God, for our standard and example, this conduct could have no place amongst us. He looks upon us all, as his image and offspring: He values some above others, only as their own intrinsic worth creates the difference. In the book of Job you read, that "God is mighty, and yet despiseth not any." And Solomon was then truly wise, when he said, "The man that despiseth his neighbour, is void of wisdom."

St. James had this argument warmly at heart, and particularly cautions his antient Christians against this very vice. "My brethren, have not," (it should be translated hold not, do not profess) "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, with respect of persons." And then, after giving an instance how imperiously they treated the inferior part of their fellow-christians; with what earnestness does he turn upon them, and urge the reason I am now pointing to! "Hearken, my beloved brethren. Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?"

So

So it was then : so it is now : and so it will be seen at last : --- that there is many a plain, honest man, in the ordinary ranks of life ; pains-taking, humble, modest, and contented ; upon whom the proud, the wealthy, and the gay, your people of fashion title and family, can hardly condescend to look down, but with haughty, scornful eyes. Yet when these transitory distinctions of greatness shall cease, and they must each take a new place in a new state ; with what peculiar justice might the prophet's words be applied to those sons of vanity and prosperity ! “ Behold now ye “ Despisers, and wonder, and perish ! ” What would you now give, to exchange conditions ? How happy would you now think yourselves, could you lie in the bosom, or even sit beneath the footstool, of the men, whom you once so disdained ?

4. I have but one lesson more that I would recommend to your thoughts, from this important doctrine---it is a very clear, as well as a very comprehensive one. “ If our common “ Judge thus views us all, with a compassionate, impartial regard ; let this reflection “ guide and animate your endeavours : let it “ inspire courage and integrity, into men of all “ orders ;



## S E R M O N XV.

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orders, of all abilities ; under all the difficulties, and in all the employments, of life."

The theatre of the present world, is a great, a noble object to contemplate. It has scenes very many, and of extensive concern. Sundry and various parts, are to be performed upon it ; all useful, all beautiful, in their kind : no one part, in itself, is little or contemptible. For as, on the literal stage, he that personates a Servant, or a Sailor, to perfection, as justly claims the applause of a good actor, as the man who represents a General, or an Emperor, so will the supreme Judge pronounce upon us. Be your part in life what it may ; if you do but act it well ; you have your praise, and shall have your reward.

If Providence has put into your hands, power, wealth, and preeminence ; know your post here upon earth : consider it " with fear " to abuse, or misapply, the precious gift. Let these words in the Book of Wisdom, be your constant monitors. " Hear O ye kings, and " understand : learn, ye that be judges of the " ends of the earth. Give ear, ye that rule " the people, and glory in the multitude of " nations. For power is given you of the " Lord, and sovereignty from the most High ; " who

“ who shall try your works, and search out  
“ your counsels. Being ministers of his king-  
“ dom, if ye have not judged aright, nor kept  
“ the law, nor walked after the counsel of  
“ God; horribly and speedily shall He come  
“ upon you: for a sharp judgment shall be  
“ to them that are in high places. For mercy  
“ will soon pardon the mean man; but mighty  
“ men shall be mightily tormented.”

Change the case now. Suppose it your lot, to be tried with affliction; with want, and “ low estate.” Never be induced to think abjectly of yourself; or to fancy that God, the righteous, all-discerning Governor, bestows no attention upon you. It was no partiality, no disfavour, which placed you thus. Mark well the duties of your place. Be assured that, by discharging them patiently and faithfully, you shall one day rise to a level with those, who sit now so far above you.

Finally: Let a man be learned, and ingenious; or ignorant, and of inferior accomplishments: The former has no cause to boast, nor the latter to be disheartened. The former has a larger task set him; a larger account which he must render up, to that sovereign Lord, who delivered to him his “ ten talents:” the latter



# S E R M O N XV.

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Letter shall have nothing more demanded from him, than the improvement of the little which was given him. Only let him not "hide his one talent in a napkin!" No! Let Both do their best: and Both shall be recompensed, according to their work; according to the matter, they had to work upon. Thus the servant and the master, the bond and the free, should all remember, that they have one almighty "Master in heaven," with whom "there is no respect of persons" ---the Master, who conducts this whole stage of the world; who has assigned us all our respective characters, and keeps a watchful eye over us all; who will confer his greatest joys, upon the greatest works; but even upon the least Worker, whose endeavours to serve Him are earnest and sincere, He will pronounce the same gracious sentence: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; into the joy, that is adapted to thee; the joy of which thou art capable, and for which thou art qualified."

To the King Eternal---

S E R M O N

...shall have nothing more to do with  
...than the improvement of the little  
...which was given him. Only let him not

# SERMON XVII

...according to their work, ac-  
...to the master, they had to work upon.  
...the master and the master, the head  
...the tree, should all remember, that  
...one shining "Master in heaven"  
...there is no respect of persons  
...the Master, who conducts the whole race  
...of the world; who has assigned us all our

...and keeps a watchful eye  
...who will confer his great blessing  
...but even upon the  
...whole, who will answer to him  
...he will pronounce the  
...Well done, thou  
...faithful servant; enter thou into  
...the joy of thy Lord; into the joy, that is  
...the joy of which thou art  
...and for which thou art qualified.

...the King of heaven, the Father who  
...it, after it was moved, under  
...or made, he might

SERMON

labour



# S E R M O N XVI.

JOHN V. 14.

*Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest  
a worse thing come unto thee.*

**I**N the second and third verses of this chapter, the sacred historian mentions a certain pool at Jerusalem, remarkable for curing diseases, and thence called Bethesda; that is, the house, or place, of mercy.

The water in this pool, at a particular season (very probably at the passover, the most solemn festival among the Jews) was put in motion by the descent of an Angel; and received a peculiar miraculous quality, of restoring to health one sick person (the first who slept into it, after it was so moved) under whatever distemper, or malady, he might labour.

Our

Our Lord observed a poor lame man, that had long waited for this desireable remedy; but, having nobody to put him soon enough into the water, had been constantly disappointed; by some one, more active, getting in before him.

Looking therefore kindly upon him, as an object who deserved compassion, and would make a good use of the mercy shewn him; Christ asked him, if he did not wish to be “loosed from his infirmity?---“ Wilt thou “be made whole?” And on the man’s complaining, that he could never meet with a friendly hand, to assist him in obtaining his cure; our heavenly Master healed him instantly, and bade him “take up his bed and “walk.”

Presently after, our Saviour finds his Patient in the temple; whither, we may conclude, he went to pay his devout thanks, for this unexpected blessing. And, in order to promote his pious design; in order to teach him real gratitude; the text is intended as a lesson of caution, directing him how he should improve this divine favour, and what return God would expect from him; namely, that “He should not barely acknowledge it in  
“public



“ public thanksgiving, or celebrate it with  
 “ the praises of his mouth, but should let it  
 “ influence his heart, and be a perpetual guard  
 “ over all his future conduct”---“ Behold,  
 “ thou art made whole : sin no more.”

You see already, how natural is the Moral of this story ; how universally applicable to every man amongst us : since we have all, without doubt, committed offences ; all, like the cripple in the text, may be deemed Sinners. And whensoever, or by what means soever, we are delivered from the guilt of our former sins ; this is the lecture we must constantly remember---that “ The gracious in-  
 “ tention of all divine compassion, or pardon,  
 “ is the bringing men to a needful sense of  
 “ their transgressions ; and that our condi-  
 “ tion will be still far unhappier than before,  
 “ if, when God has made us whole, we neg-  
 “ lect to make ourselves better.” “ Sin no  
 “ more ; lest a worse thing come unto thee.”  
 ---This application of the text I design to pursue, by shewing you,

I. How, and in what light, we, and all christian people, are understood to be “ made  
 “ whole.”

II. The danger, and fatal effects, of returning to our sinful practices, after having received such a cure.

I, then. What our several diseases are to the body; the very same are vices, and evil habits, to the mind. As the fever distracts the brain, and fires the blood; so ungoverned passions disturb and confound the understanding, and prevent or suppress all serious attention to the nature of our actions, to the true ends of our being. As gouts and palsies deprive you of your limbs, and tie you down to your beds, or your couches; so lewdness and debauchery will cramp your best faculties, spoil your taste of what is manly and rational; debase your desires, and fix them upon low enjoyments, upon mere animal gratifications.

Accordingly; when the holy Scriptures describe the abject state of a vitious, unregenerate man; how proper, no less than elegant, are the several figures, under which they represent it! Sometimes they stile it darkness and blindness, stumbling and falling: ---no creature is so blind, as the man who has lost the sight of good and evil: none are fallen so low, or so fatally, as they that are sunk



lunk beneath all sense of duty, towards God, their neighbour, and themselves.

At other times, a course of profligate living, is compared to sickness and wounds, to bruises and mortifications. None are so mortally wounded, as they whose consciences are wounded with guilt : none are so irrecoverably dead, as they that “ are dead in sins and “ trespasses.”

When Christ therefore is set forth, as the restorer of virtue and happiness to mankind ; the most affectionate as well as beautiful among all his characters, is that of a Physician — the Physician of the Soul. Thus the ancient Prophets paint this “ Sun of righteousness,” as “ rising upon the world with “ healing in his wings.” And our Saviour, in his very first Sermon, takes to Himself the words, which Isaiah had spoken of Him long before : “ The Lord hath anointed me, to “ preach the Gospel to the poor : He hath “ sent me, to heal the broken-hearted ; to “ open the eyes of the blind ; to set at liberty “ them that are bruised.” And the Prophet Ezekiel, still in the same pleasing metaphor : “ I will seek that which was lost, will “ bind up that which was broken, and

“will strengthen that which was sick.”

If you duly consider the person and life of your Saviour, the nature and design of his holy religion; you will see with unspeakable comfort, how fully He has answered this amiable description: along with those Jews who heard Him appropriate these prophecies to himself and his Gospel, you will “all bear Him witness, and wonder at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.”

For with what a tender, what a skilful hand, has He wrought our cure; if we will only submit to his gentle remedies!

That the guilt of our past sins may no longer oppress us, He himself is our “advocate with the offended Father;” He himself is “the propitiation for our sins.”

That we may not hereafter be drawn into error, or superstition; He has opened to us “the whole counsel of God;” has given us the justest notions, concerning his divine providence and perfections; has taught us the only acceptable way, of worshipping and serving Him.

Again; that we may never more be tempted to sinful follies, be allured by vitious pleasures, or corrupted by sensual desires; He has



has delivered us the purest rules of life ; has given them their best and highest influence, by living them all over in his own person, by leaving us his own lovely and bright example.

Finally ; that nothing might be wanting, to dissuade or deter, to encourage or support us ; to work upon our hopes, as well as our fears ; and to make our very passions animate our reason ; --- Christianity has armed us with every divine sanction, which can enforce its gracious laws ; with the most interesting promises, the most awful threatnings ; with the rewards and punishments of a future, eternal state ; with the aid of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Comforter ; and of Christ himself, our continual, all-powerful Intercessor, at God's own right hand.

Thus, in general, may every Christian apply to himself, the spiritual sense of our text ; and may truly say, " Behold I am made whole."

When the adulterous woman, in the eighth chapter of this same Gospel, was released from her accusers, because not one amongst them had innocence enough, to " cast the first stone " at her ; the poor criminal perhaps might make herself easy, and imagine she had met

with an happy escape. But if she thought at all rightly, she could not help apprehending herself to be still in great danger. She had gotten clear, indeed, of judges that had themselves guilty consciences; but now she stood before one, in whose heart was no guilt, in whose tongue there was no guile, in whose whole life there was not a single blemish. He therefore had full right, to "cast the stone," and to condemn her. Yet, behold the mercy of this spotless Judge. He treated her, as He did the impotent man in the text; and as He has promised to treat us all. No immediate condemnation--only "Go, and sin no more."

2. But, though we are blest with all these advantages of light and grace, of pardon and redemption; we are men still! Men subject to strong passions, liable to various instances of misconduct. And as often as ever we deliberately sin; so often do we become sick, and want a cure. Therefore the second Application of this text, may be made to those persons, "who, by timely consideration, rescue themselves from the dominion of any particular vices, under which they have fallen."

From such a creature as man in his present state, encircled with temptations and bodily appetites,



appetites, there cannot be expected a whole life of perfect reason, or unsullied virtue. The utmost we can hope, is, that he be free from numerous and presumptuous transgressions, against the plain dictates of his nature and his conscience. This indeed is possible: it is his obligation: it is the noblest aim of an honest and ingenuous mind. But since, even in this, we are too frequently seen to fail; the next good thing to never doing evil actions, or never indulging evil inclinations, is the lamenting them, and the correcting them, in due season, and with due pains.

Repentance then (whatever some lewd, ignorant libertines, may pretend to think) is a manly, a commendable, principle. It bespeaks the remains of something in the heart, truly sensible and rational. It is all the amends that can be made, to the party offended. It is all that the offender himself can do; all that his case and condition will admit. Without question therefore, there is, from the very reason of things, an inherent worth and value in it. To break off inveterate habits, to renounce a favourite passion, and purify a vitiated mind, is a great, an arduous, a generous work. And as it is an essential benefit to the

man himself, you cannot doubt of its being acceptable to God.

They were such reflections as these, upon which many thoughtful and learned Heathens founded their hope, that 'God would pardon the sins of penitent men.' But all they could do, was to hope; they neither attained, nor could attain, an absolute certainty. For though we may safely pronounce, that repentance will thus far be pleasing to God, and beneficial to the sinner, that it will lighten his punishment, in comparison with what that punishment would have been, had he lived and died impenitent; yet whether God will so entirely overlook any sinful action (but especially any sinful course of action) as not to punish the sinner at all---is what mere reason could never possibly determine.

And here I may modestly appeal to any candid, impartial Deist, whether the foundation upon which the christian Penitent stands, be not a most desirable one; whether he himself would not wish for a religion, which offers him a pardon of his repented iniquities. Which sets God before him, as a "Father of mercies, forgiving transgressions and sins." Which invites him to reform his life, by an  
express



express assurance, that an atonement is made for him; that the wounds he feared were mortal, are kindly healed by the blood of a Redeemer;---that, in short, he has nothing to do, but to repent and be saved.

So then, whatever becomes of the Infidel, and his case; a Believer, upon his own principles, may thus further apply to himself his Saviour's words. Not only as a Christian in general, but as a Penitent for sins committed after his baptism, he may truly say, "I am made whole."

2. A third application of this text, as of other like passages in Scripture, may be made on our duly and worthily communicating at the holy Sacrament.

But here, I am afraid, many people either misunderstand, or wilfully pervert, one of the best institutions. To that divine rite do indeed belong great benefits and blessings; but no secret operations, no unintelligible spiritual charms, upon the heart of the communicant. There is no mysterious connection between the grace of heaven, and the mere outward form of receiving the bread and wine, abstracted from the internal piety of your minds, from the real amendment of your lives.

No!

Not the whole grace and blessing lies here; namely, that In sincere Penitents, a regular attendance on this solemn commemoration of our Lord's death and sufferings, is an excellent means to cherish, confirm, and perfect, all the virtuous dispositions, all the good resolutions, which they bring along with them. But whoever he be, that either comes hither without these dispositions at first, or bids them farewell the moment he is gone; ---every man of this sort, is so far from being able to say, "behold I am made whole," that he might much more properly say, "behold I am made worse."

And should any one amongst us, be so foolish, so wicked, as to presume, that after he has long continued in any gross, unreformed sin, a set of weekly devotions will qualify him for receiving this sacrament; that the receiving it, will wipe away all past guilt; and that his returning afresh to the same evil habit, will be only beginning a new, a fresh, account; ---all I can say about such a person is, that, "instead of using this sacred ceremony as a means of grace, he is turning the whole grace of God, into lasciviousness."

II. The



II. The Second Point I proposed, when I chose this text, was ; “ To reflect upon the  
“ peculiar danger of repeating our sinful  
“ practices, after the cure has been once  
wrought upon us.”

When our Lord gave this warning to his Patient ; “ Sin no more, lest a worse thing  
“ come unto thee ;” He could not mean, that,  
“ if ever the man again committed any one  
“ immoral act, he should immediately forfeit  
“ the whole benefit of his cure, and be pu-  
“ nished with keener severity than ever.”  
This, I say, could never be our merciful Saviour’s meaning. And therefore by sinning we are to understand (what the holy Scriptures almost always intend by it) the falling into a deliberate, a frequent, transgression of our duty.

In this sense, our sinning after amendment and forgiveness, exactly answers to a relapse into some dangerous distemper of body. For as, in such a relapse, the disorder not only rises again to its first height, but attacks a constitution already shocked by the former sickness ; the case is precisely the same with vice. Whenever you run into it designedly and wilfully, after fair conviction, after actual repentance ; as it then gathers more guilt, so  
does

does it gather more strength. It comes upon a heart, that has weakened its own powers, betrayed its own reason, defeated and blasted its own resolutions.

A person who often violates his conscience, and the good purposes he had formed in his mind; goes the direct way to lose all esteem, all inward honour, all reverence, of himself. He will have no spirit to frame new resolutions, after seeing and feeling how easily the old ones were baffled and broken. Thus, by losing all good opinion of himself, he will grow careless of himself: and as his taste for virtue decays, his relish for evil pleasures will increase.

These reasons too evidently prove, that although the man who has sinned against the light of the Gospel, has indeed no sufficient cause to despair; yet his recovery will necessarily be a more difficult work, than his first instruction, or conversion.

And that dissolute Christian, who under bodily sickness becomes a penitent; who prays for health, for divine mercy, and obtains it; then presently forgets this mercy, and drops back into the very vices which were just before forgiven him; ---even he, I say, may possibly be again restored to pardon: but his restoration



oration will cost him deeper contrition, more numerous tears, a more painful repentance.

Finally ; that frequenter of the holy sacrament, who has demonstrated by all his subsequent behaviour, how ill prepared he was for receiving it ; must find a due preparation, to him, a task of extraordinary labour and sorrow !

Let me only add---What will charity herself have to plead in our behalf, should that at last be chargeable upon Christians, which our blessed Lord, the supreme Physician, remarked concerning those Jewish Lepers He once cured ;---“ if out of ten amongst us, “ who were cleansed and made whole, there “ shall be found but one, who returned to “ give glory to God, by living for the future in thankful obedience ; while of the “ remaining nine it may truly be said, that, “ with such ungrateful, incorrigible creatures, the latter end is far worse than the “ beginning.”

To God, only wise---

formation will contain deeper conviction, more numerous tears, a more painful repentance. Finally, the repentance of the old man, who has been visited by an ill man, how ill prepared he was for receiving it; that and a due preparation, to him, a task of extraordinary labour and sorrow. Let me only add, what will chiefly help to make it plain in our hearts, should this at last be the case, of our Christian, who our blessed Lord, the Prince of Peace, has marked concerning that Jewish people. He says, "it is out of ten among us, who are cleansed and made whole, there shall be found but one, who returns to God, to give glory for the gift of His merciful assistance; while the rest, being given to me, they will be ungrateful, as with their ingratitude, they will still seek to be justified, and is the more than the light of the body, the transiency of the mind, the product of the public command, the real interest of every private man. Nay, even upon the supposition of this, and impossible as it is, the MONARCH



## S E R M O N XVII.

I CORINTHIANS ii. 9.

*It is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,  
neither have entered into the heart of man,  
the things which God hath prepared for them  
that love Him.*

**T**HE arguments usually offered for persuading men to the practice of virtue, and for deterring them from habits of vice, are attended with the most convincing evidence; if we would only reflect upon the constitution of things, or the circumstances of our own Being.

These inducements are nothing less than the health of the body, the tranquillity of the mind, the prosperity of all public communities, the real interest of every private man.

Nay, even upon the supposition (absurd and impossible as it is) that no God or Providence

Providence governs the world; that there will be no future punishment of any wicked actions; yet justice, right, and truth, would still be what they are; all falsehood, oppression, violence, and sensuality, would still be wrong, mad, and extravagant. The reason is manifest---namely, that Virtue and Vice, with the salutary consequences generally produced by the former, the mischiefs generally accompanying the latter, are founded in the nature of man, in the nature of human society, in the relations which reasonable and social creatures bear to each other, as well as to their common Creator.

But though it is unquestionably certain, upon the whole, that goodness ought to be chosen, and wickedness avoided, for their own sakes, for their directly opposite present effects; yet in the state assigned us here (a state of Probation, that we may rise higher in the scale of perfection hereafter) this motive is often found incapable of holding men steady to their duty, or of preserving their integrity. The argument looks fair in theory, but will not fully answer in practice.

Our passions form so considerable a part of our composition; our appetites are so pressing objects



objects to gratify them are always so ready at hand; our pleasures, our temptations, our bad examples, are so various, so attractive; that mere reason, in many particular cases, is too feeble a guard to virtue. And though natural religion be ever so true, though conscience be ever so plain; there is something still wanting, to animate the whole man, to awaken every faculty, to make the passions themselves become the friends of reason;--- in one word, to stir up the Wills, and to support the Resolutions, of mankind.

Upon this very principle, many intelligent Heathens, who, through the negligence and vices of their forefathers, had lost all records of revelation; all express notices concerning "the doctrine of future rewards and punishments;" yet saw the doctrine itself to be so reasonable, so beneficial, that they not only espoused it, but invented it, and pretended divine authority for the truth of it. They supplied with fable, the want of a divine oracle.

On this same account Almighty God, the Creator and Saviour of all men, has acted so wisely, as well as so mercifully, towards us Christians; that nothing now is wanting, no method is left untried, which can invite

us to virtue; no excuse remains, for any deliberate vice. Beside the laws of nature, the light of reason and experience; He has fortified our minds, with his own powerful, explicit sanctions. To motives of present interest, He has superadded the promise of future, immortal happiness.

In representing to us this future bliss, the holy Scriptures employ all the pleasing figures, all the lively images, that can captivate the heart of such a creature as man; that can charm our rational part, while at the same time they kindle our most generous passions.

For example, We love riches; we delight in the idea of affluence, and plenty. Therefore you have proposed for your purchase, a pearl of inestimable price; infinitely worthy that you should sell all you possess, to gain it: a treasure, which will never fail you; which no fraud can diminish, no violence can deprive you of!

Again. We are, in general, ardently desirous of honours, promotion, superiority. Therefore God, for your short service of obedience here, has promised you a throne, and a kingdom; a throne, which you can never lose; a kingdom, which cannot be shaken. And  
Christ



Christ will “make you Kings and Priests,  
“unto God, even his Father.”

Lastly. We are naturally fond of fame, and are strongly incited to action by the hope of applause, by the prospect of having our names kept alive, and handed down to Posterity. How then could this ambition be so raised, or ennobled; as by an assurance, that, “The  
“righteous shall shine forth in the kingdom  
“of the supreme Father, even as the sun for  
“brightness, as the Stars for ever and ever.” So, in St. John’s Revelation, our Lord has declared: “To him that overcometh” (the vices of the world) “I will give to eat of the  
“tree of life: I will give him an everlasting  
“name: I will write upon his forehead the  
“name of my God.”

Now, grand and lofty as these descriptions may appear, they are still mere figures, mere allusions. Therefore, to prevent our taking them in their literal acceptation, or building our idea of God’s celestial kingdom upon any low notions of human pomp and felicity; to extend our views, and exalt our wishes, far above all earthly things; St. Paul here, by a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, has given us a most sublime character of the heavenly

state; containing an excellent caution, as well as matter of inexpressible comfort, to all christian believers. He tells us, that its joys, honours, and pleasures, are not only not the same with those visible, sensible ones, which now so allure and dazzle and enslave us; but are infinitely different from them, infinitely superior to them. Sense has nothing that can reach their taste, nor can imagination itself apprehend their greatness: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can the heart of man conceive them."

But before we enter particularly into this description, we should attend a while to the condition and qualifications of the persons, who will enjoy these blessings. To which end let us consider, "What the love of God is;" "In what way it must be exercised;" and "How liable many people are, to misunderstand the nature of it"---the things "which God hath prepared for them that love him."

I. If this inquiry were brought home to the generality of Christians, and they were asked in plain terms, "Whether they love God, or no;" such a query would be taken for an affront, or a banter, rather than a serious question.



question. Men of all denominations, of all churches, sects, and sentiments, would be highly offended, were you to say, or even to suspect, that "They do not love their Maker, or their Redeemer." Yet alas! When we search into this love of theirs, and put it to the only fair trial; when we prove it, as we should a tree, by the goodness of its fruits; what do we find it to be, or what does its value amount to!

Sometimes a wild fancy, agitated by the wildest notions, transports them with enthusiastic rapture, to extol and magnify God (which they conceive is loving Him, in the religious sense) merely because they suppose that He has a peculiar affection for them; that He has elected them to eternal happiness before all other men, by an arbitrary, inexplicable decree. Thus the most foolish, nay the most criminal presumption, passes for real, genuine piety.

Sometimes a busy, injudicious zeal, for certain abstruse doctrines; for the favourite tenets of a party; for a few insignificant ceremonies of worship; a strict attention to these matters, with a forwardness to propagate them, to dispute about them;----shall be

deemed pious fervour, and the spirit of holiness. Hence does that cheap, that insipid thing, called formality, usurp the sacred name of religious love.

Other men, with rather a more specious appearance, a more decent face of piety, make shift to work up their minds, into a contemplative love of the Deity. When they consider his infinite attributes, his almighty power, his universal presence, his unerring wisdom, his diffusive goodness and mercies over all his works; they have before them (they cannot possibly but have) a most lovely idea, an object the greatest, the most amiable! So they admire, necessarily, and inevitably! But if you stop here, you have nothing more than the love of speculation only, an entertainment of mere wonder:---you are still far distant from religion, or duty.

For that love of God, which our own best reason dictates, which the scriptures press upon us as a qualification for future glory or reward, is a practical thing, and includes the whole of a virtuous life. It is not seated in the fancy: it does not lie dormant in the understanding: but it influences the Will, and regulates the moral conduct. It is not a  
fit



fit of passion, a transient gust or wind of affection; but a sedate, permanent principle of heart, leading us to imitate those divine excellencies, which we love and revere.

If you truly love your fellow-creature, you will ever be desirous of obliging him, of becoming like him, and thereby agreeable to him: for likeness naturally begets Love: and if you have a generous desire of obliging him, this is an infallible sign that you love him.

I might confirm these assertions, by the most familiar instances: and the Scriptures that support them, are almost without number.

A Subject is not understood to love his King, by commending his valour, his policy, or his person; or by admiring the gayety and splendor of his court. A Child cannot be said to love a tender, affectionate Parent, by rejoicing at the largeness of his estate, or by being pleased with his kindneses and indulgence. No! That man loves his Prince effectually, who observes his laws, who promotes the peace and welfare of his government. That son honoureth his father aright, who follows his good example, who does every thing necessary for advancing the honour and interest of his family.

This, from beginning to end, is the scripture-doctrine of the love we owe to "our Father who is in heaven." That love is entirely founded upon a just sense of the divine nature and perfections. Its constant, its only marks are, our humble, sincere endeavours, to transcribe those perfections into ourselves, by an uniform course of sobriety, righteousness, and charity.

When Moses, in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, exhorts the Israelites, "to fear the Lord and to love Him" (which are absolutely the same thing) he presently shews them what this duty is, and by what means they must perform it;---namely, by "Walking in his ways; by serving Him with all their heart, with all their soul; by keeping his commandments, and his statutes, which He had commanded them for their Good."

Our blessed Saviour appears to have thought He could never too often repeat the inseparable connection, between loving God, and obeying Him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them; HE it is, that loveth me. If a man love me, he will keep my words."

St.



St. John, who leaned on Christ's bosom, and seems acquainted with his Lord's most intimate notions, dwells upon this topick continually, throughout his first Epistle, "Whofo keepeth God's word, in HIM verily  
 "is the love of God perfected: hereby we know  
 "that we are of the truth, and shall assure  
 "our hearts before Him. This is the love of  
 "God, that we keep his commandments."

In the fourth chapter, the Apostle gives you an exceedingly natural and striking illustration of this matter: "No man hath seen  
 "God, at any time: if we love one another,  
 "God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. If a man say, I love God, and  
 "hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he  
 "that loveth not his brother, whom he hath  
 "seen; how can he love God, whom he  
 "hath not seen?"

The inference from all this, is clear and obvious. "As a wicked man cannot, without  
 "the grossest hypocrisy, pretend to religion,  
 "or the love of God; so no devout, virtuous  
 "Christian, needs be under any uneasy doubts,  
 "whether he loves his Creator as he ought to  
 "do. Obedience is the sincerest love. And  
 "whoever among you leads a life of truth  
 and

and goodness, certainly loves God, who is  
 "goodness and truth itself."

II. Having thus sufficiently examined the condition, upon which the reward must be obtained; let us, in the next place, remark the description here given of the reward itself.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither  
 "have entered into the heart of man, the  
 "things" (the future happy state of being)  
 "which God hath prepared for them that  
 "love Him."

In this account the Apostle, after a truly elegant, as well as philosophical manner, heightens our idea of his subject, by three distinct steps or degrees.

I. The Sight of the Eye presents us with a wonderful diversity of objects, both for our entertainment and improvement. It opens to our view the marvellous field of nature, the unnumbered beauties in the Creator's works. The very light it makes use of, is something exquisitely delightful and surprising. "Truly," says the wise Teacher, "the light is sweet; and a pleasant thing it is, to behold the Sun." For, by beholding him, we behold, in the heavens and upon earth, works that discover such power and providence, such  
 order



Order, harmony and proportion ; as might employ and charm the minds of creatures far superior to us, for endless generations !

But, 2, what we hear by the ear, still exceeds all that we see with the eye. The place we occupy, or the tract of country we can personally visit, is extremely small. And the observations we ourselves can make, are very few ; compared with what have been made by men possessing more acute penetration, and more extensive knowledge. For one fact, or one event, which we have actually seen, within the narrow sphere of our own short lives ; we hear of hundreds and thousands, through all the various regions of the globe, and in the annals of the numerous successive ages that have passed before us. So eminently does the information which comes by the ear, surpass that which we receive by the eye.

Yet, 3, even this is nothing ; if you consider what the imagination can devise, and picture to the mind. Imagination is a vast, an almost boundless, faculty. To them who exercise and exert it with vigor, it will form schemes of happiness ; draw landscapes of pleasure ; range into distant worlds and scenes of being, without name, without end. Thus  
does

does the Fancy comprehend more, than all the Senses put together.

But, says St. Paul, unlimited as you may think this power; it is utterly unable to approach the nature and excellence of the heavenly blessings. Your utmost invention is as inferior to those delights, as the seeing of the eye is to the hearing of the ear, or the hearing of the ear to the imagination of the heart.

Nor is this any wonder at all. For the things of another life, are properly spiritual; and must be spiritually discerned. They can be conceived by none, but enlarged understandings; and cannot be enjoyed, but by creatures of Wills highly rectified, of purified and refined Affections.

In the mean time, let it suffice us to know, that there certainly is such a thing, as seeing God, and being like Him; that this likeness of Him, is the natural, the only preparative, for a share in his favour, for a place in his heavenly kingdom; and that this resemblance of Him, must be begun and improved by us in the present life, that it may become more perfect, more glorious, in the next.

Let it suffice us to know, that as Light is here the medium, through which we discern  
all



all visible objects ; so is virtue the sole accomplishment, which can enable us, either to see, or to taste, the pleasures of that celestial world.

Let no man therefore deceive himself with vain notions, about Religion, and the Love of his Maker. Never be persuaded that this Love can consist in any thing really, but in  
 ‘ Copying the Supreme Goodness, by a conscientious practise of what is right and good, towards your fellow-christians, towards all mankind.

Finally, and especially. Whatever be the particular nature, or the particular manner, of the future joys ; a question in which, at present, we have very little concern ; depend upon it, that a debauched, wicked life, will absolutely unfit and disqualify us for them all. Into that kingdom you can never enter, with lust, or pride, or treacherous dispositions, about you. Remember that, as with respect to all honest, upright Christians, the words of the Text are most true, and most comfortable ; so, with regard to all sinful, impenitent ones, it is as true, and equally terrible---that “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can the human heart conceive,  
 “ the

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“ the punishments which God hath prepared  
 “ for those, whom no arguments could en-  
 “ gage, either to love Him, or to fear Him !”

To Whom be glory !

S E R M O N



## S E R M O N XVIII.

MATTHEW xii. 36, 37.

*But I say unto you, that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

**A**S these two verses, rightly understood and duly considered, will be eminently serviceable to us, in the conduct of our christian life; so, by being misinterpreted, they have given some weak persons not only much pain of mind, but a very wrong turn of behaviour. That ‘A mere idle, insignificant, or jocose expression, can be so offensive, so highly criminal, before God, as to draw down a divine judgment upon it;’ is one of those “hard sayings,” concerning which every man may fairly cry out, “Who can hear them?”

During

During our late grand civil war, and for a considerable time after, there was such a spirit of superstitious bigotry, running through this nation; that many people (who otherwise perhaps had as good understanding as their neighbours) by taking this text in the rigid sense of our English word Idle, kept their mouths almost constantly shut through fear; gave up all mirth, all freedom, in conversation; and dreaded to speak, even about common, necessary business, with any tolerable cheerfulness, lest they should speak evil.

Now this, like many similar mistakes, proceeds entirely from mens not "knowing the Scriptures," or the nature of true religion. For the state of things about us, the very condition of human society, is such; as makes it impossible that all our words should carry strict morality in them, or that all conversation should be religious. And if the affairs of life were not sometimes tempered with pleasantry and good humour, to lighten its cares; the world would become a scene of dumb shew, piety would be a poor melancholy thing!

The epithet Idle, in our English translation, does by no means reach our Saviour's original,



original, proper, meaning. The true rendering should be (or, at least, the true sense is) every wicked, malicious, profane word. What our Lord here condemns, is the "corrupt communication," condemned by St. Paul; that "evil communication, which corrupts good manners;" which itself proceeds from a debauched mind, and tends to debauch the minds of others.

This the context incontestibly shews. For our blessed Master directed this threatening against those Jews, who had reviled his person, blasphemed his miracles, and ascribed them to a confederacy with the Prince of Devils. He tells these men, He could expect no better language, from people of their principles. "A good man," says He, "out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things: and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."---"A man's conversation, as well as his actions, has its source in the temper and disposition of his mind." Consequently for the same reason that we are

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justified or condemned by our works, we ought to be so by our words, or discourse. "Every wicked word therefore, that men shall speak; they shall give account thereof, in the day of judgment."

What I intend laying before you, will relate, you see, to the benefits and mischiefs of language; to the virtues and vices of the tongue. These I shall,

I. Describe in their principal branches.

II. I shall offer what I hope will convince you, how equitable it is, that men should be judged, rewarded or punished, in proportion to Either.

I, then. Next to the noble faculty of Reason or Understanding, the most excellent and distinguishing, the finest and most valuable accomplishment, which God has bestowed upon man, is that of Speech. By this, all the thoughts and inventions of the mind, are conveyed and communicated, are enlarged and improved. It is this, that facilitates all intercourse, all transactions, between man and man; that gives all the pleasures, of conversation and society; that heightens all our delights, and alleviates all our griefs. It is the nurse of all arts and sciences, the means of



of recommending, of endearing us, to each other.

And as this power, when rationally exercised, is thus highly useful, as well as ornamental; so the abuses of it lay a foundation for infinite, unnumbered, evils. Inasmuch that a wicked tongue, as St. James truly says, is enough to "set a world on fire," as it is itself "set on fire of hell." I will reduce these abuses to the general instances that follow---Profaneness, Lewdness, Ill-natured Wit, Falsity, Slander, and Flattery.

1. Profaneness of discourse is a most rash, a most daring insult, both upon God, and upon man. If you have any notion, any belief, concerning a supreme Creator; the Author of your being, of all your faculties and enjoyments, and the Judge of all your actions; you ought never to name or to mention such a Governor, without the profoundest humility. You pay this respect, in some just measure, to the names even of your earthly Superiors; to the "men of like passions" with yourselves; especially while you are in their presence: and how senseless must you be, if you can forget, that the Almighty God is always and every where present! The

throwing out his name therefore, and his divine attributes, from our mouths, in an unsanctified manner, or upon worthless, frivolous occasions, demonstrates a sad want of reverence for Him, for the whole relation He bears to us ! What an evil tongue must that be, which, for the merest trifles, can call down curses upon his fellow-creature from that very God, whom he himself professes to acknowledge as the Fountain of all his own free, undeserved blessings !

Other kinds of profane speeches, against sacred things or persons, are alike unmannerly towards men : and a very little instruction in the most obvious rules of good sense or good breeding, would be sufficient to shame them from all companies, to banish them from every table and society. What if you yourself have no apprehension, about Him that made you ; about the written word, the providence, or the judgments, of Heaven ; it is enough that other men do apprehend these things, and hold them in extreme veneration. To such men their own name and reputation is not one half so dear, as is the name and honour of their Creator !

Surely there is an ingenuous treatment due



to the sentiments of your neighbour, as well as to his person. And it is impossible for insolence to shew itself more grossly, when you spit it in a man's face, than when you affront his understanding.

Every man's principles may be fairly debated: but no man's conscience ought to be offended. Matters of religion have at least an equal claim to civility, with all others. Whoever therefore frets and vexes the hearts of his companions with impious conversation, is absolutely unworthy the character of a man: he sinks as far beneath the behaviour of a gentleman, as the behaviour of a Christian. To be short; infidelity may be much more excuseable in some, than in others: but blasphemy can be vindicated by no powers of sophistry, in any creatures living.

2. Lewd, obscene Discourse, is the disgrace of every tongue; a scandal to all who retain the smallest taste for the decorum, or decencies, of human life. No philosophers, no moral writers or teachers upon earth, have ever mentioned it, but with peculiar marks of abhorrence. And the christian religion, in higher, in more express terms, forbids not only all acts of impurity, but all words

that are indelicate, or immodest. "Fornication," says St. Paul, "and all uncleanness, let it not once be named amongst you, as becometh saints: neither filthiness, nor foolish-talking, nor jesting; which are not convenient." Not convenient---an Epithet, exactly similar to the idle words in the text; words that really do an infinite deal of mischief, and produce very sinful consequences.

Our words have a ready, a direct, passage to the heart. They raise our ideas; and are powerful, beyond all things, to excite our passions. And whenever you talk upon a vicious subject after an indecent manner, and put it into an unseemly dress; it will either find, or create, in unwary minds, desires agreeable to itself. Nor will it be any excuse (though it may appear somewhat less offensive) if, being ashamed of coarser liberties, you convey your lewd notions in more polished phrase. This, I think, so far from salving the matter or securing your innocence, will rather cause the lewdness to be the sooner and the more easily received. But disguise it how you please, by the garb in which you cloath it; the minds of most people will know



know it too quickly, and probably entertain it with the less reluctance. 'Obscenity is like the poison of the plague: you can never wrap it up so close, but that the infection will be caught by all who come near it.'

Amongst young persons especially, there is not a more unhappy circumstance in the world, than for them often to hear bad, unbecoming things, embellished with fictitious names, or palliated with art and ingenuity. This will abate their natural prejudice against vice, and kill their native modesty. It will, by terrible degrees, reconcile their tempers, and beguile their inclinations, from hearing to loving the things, which they would otherwise detest.

It is of inconceivable moment therefore, in what language, and upon what topicks, you discourse before others; particularly, before those of the younger sort. For, be assured, 'He will stand but a slender chance, ever to speak or to act like a man, who has been accustomed to licentious speeches and practices, when he was a child.'

3. Another well-known evil, that flows from the tongue, is 'the abuse of wit in conversation, by making unseasonable and

uncharitable reflections, upon things or persons. Wit is a talent, that is generally allowed to set a man off, in the eyes of his companions. This, however, is most certain; that great numbers have it (I rather mean, pretend to have it) who little understand how to use it. Many of us forget the limits, they should prescribe to this talent: they do not distinguish, what are the subjects, proper for ridicule. Some Matters are so weighty, so important, as to be above it. Such are the clear dictates of religion, or conscience; and the laws of civil government. So again, Some Men, by their very rank, their very situation, should be exempt from all touches of a scurrilous tongue: and the natural imperfections, or the misfortunes, under which Others labour, should render them objects of all the compassion you can bestow, but never of the least raillery.

A keen, cutting reflection, will very often wound another man to the heart; though the author perhaps might have no direct design of doing him mischief--like throwing about fire, without an intention to burn peoples houses. So that this man of wit, is nothing at last, but Solomon's fool and mad-man; who



who "casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,"  
 "and then saith, am I not in sport?"

Let me desire you will also remember, that  
 all malicious wit is, from its very nature,  
 greatly injurious, even to the person who  
 is guilty of it. There are as high resent-  
 ments raised by words, as by actions. Cruel  
 insinuations frequently resemble the two-  
 edged sword:---when the blow is given too  
 hard, the sharper edge will recoil upon the  
 striker! And he that makes his neighbour  
 afraid of his Satire, has as much reason to be  
 afraid of the other's memory. For many a  
 one, that has esteemed this favourite talent his  
 top qualification, has employed it so injudi-  
 ciously, as to render it the instrument of his  
 own destruction.

4. Falsity of speech, is an utter enemy to  
 every purpose, for which speech was given us.  
 And "lying lips" are such a curse upon man-  
 kind, that, should they once become universal,  
 it would have been a providential mercy, if  
 we had all been born dumb, without any other  
 way of conversing, than what is common to  
 the "beasts that perish."

It is this execrable perversion of language,  
 that would render all business a burden and a  
 vexation,

vexation, all trade a cheat; that would destroy all the validity of promises; make oaths themselves to signify nothing; bring discord, suspicion, and confusion, into every scene, every transaction, throughout life.

Two especial branches of Falsity, are Slander, and Flattery.

Slander, or Calumny, is the fruit of a tongue, acted by a base, malevolent spirit. It supposes a total want of all solid worth in the offender. For those men, who take the least care to provide any foundation whereon they may build their own reputation, are ever most apt to build it upon the ruin of other peoples. They vainly imagine, that what they feloniously take from the scale of their brethrens good name, will be just so much weight added to their own.

Every dealer in scandal, has a despicable ambition, of pulling down others to the level with himself. He can find no comfort in looking at home: therefore he seeks out a wretched relief, from abroad; by inventing, magnifying, and spreading about, the defects of his neighbours. But alas, for his error! the difference between a man of real merit and a defamer, will always be as conspicuous,



as that between a Diamond and a Glow-worm. The former truly shines, by the glorious light of the Sun; the latter owes all its little false lustre, to the darkness around it.

6. And yet, if I might be allowed to compare enormous crimes together; I could confidently pronounce, that "flattering lips" are even worse than slanderous ones. An open calumniator is indeed a bad enemy: but no enemy is so bad, as a treacherous friend. And you have far more need to beware of that mouth which utters friendship, or praises, upon you at random; than of that, which liberally throws out gall and enmity. For, comparatively speaking, the one fairly opposes you; but the other betrays you. An impudent false accuser, puts you upon your guard; while against the hidden traps and snares of a flatterer, it is often impossible to lay in any defence.

When this sordid vice works its effect upon persons in a private station, it makes a conceited coxcomb of one, who, without it, might have been a tolerably useful and sensible man. When it prevails over men of eminence, and distinction; it will stain the brightest characters, will sully the fairest fortunes. But if ever it creeps into courts, and high places;  
if

if ever it begins to taint the throne; and from thence to extend itself, till it grows predominant in a nation; it is then a sure prognostick, that 'Such a people are falling into contempt and decay.' It is then the forerunner of all public calamity; is quickly followed by the loss of liberty, honour, and conscience; by the loss of all confidence between prince and subjects, of all love among the subjects towards each other; upon which the common safety and prosperity of every kingdom, every government, depends.

I will close this article with a remark made on our own English nation, relative to the corruption above-mentioned, and to its fatal influence towards drawing upon us the miseries of the last great civil war. Thus our historians have pictured those times-- "Heretofore  
"the people of England were famed for their  
"gravity, truth, sincerity; for all that good  
"nature, which sweetens conversation, and  
"gives human life its proper pleasure. But  
"now friendship and kindness became the  
"baits to all the vile projects, that were to  
"be acted upon the stage. The race of men  
"was spoiled. That freedom, candour, and  
"honesty, which are the bond of peace, the  
"cement



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“cement of society, were banished from the  
“land. And those flowers of virtue, which  
“once seemed natural to the soil of this island,  
“were degenerated into the weeds of flattery,  
“treachery, and falsehood.”

Pray God preserve us, for all time to come,  
from the dreadful evils, that accompany so  
depraved a state !

Having thus given you a summary account,  
what are those vices of the tongue, which our  
Lord here says will condemn us ; I should  
now describe its opposite virtues, which will  
justify or save us ; and then shew you the  
reasons, that make it absolutely necessary we  
should be finally dealt with, according to  
either of them. But I perceive, that the time  
is already far advanced ; and that the remain-  
der of the subject, will be matter sufficient  
for another discourse.

To the King Eternal---

SERMON





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## S E R M O N XIX.

MATTHEW xii. 36, 37.

*But I say unto you, that every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

**A**S those words, or that manner of speaking and conversing, which our Saviour here says will justify a man ; that is, will be one grand article in his life, which will recommend him to the favour of God, entitle him to the character of a true Christian, and qualify him for the rewards promised in the Gospel ; ---as this, I say, must evidently be understood concerning useful, instructive, and virtuous conversation ; so I have already proved to you, from the reason of the thing, from the design of the Text, that the "idle words"

“ words” in this place, cannot mean barely such, as our English adjective Idle commonly signifies; but impious, malicious, deceitful, immodest, words.

These I have enumerated, under their principal heads; and have shewn you wherein consists that evil of each, which must end in our condemnation. The general instances I mentioned, were, Profaneness, Lewdness, Ill-natured Wit, Falstiy, Calumny, and Flattery.

What those words or speeches are, which, on the other side, contain such merit in them, as to become an article of our justification at the great day of judgment; will easily be gathered, by only placing before your thoughts all the several Contraries to the vices above described, and observing their beneficial, salutary effects.

After I have done this, in a short compass; the Second Point I undertook to demonstrate, namely, “ How equitable it is that men should be rewarded or punished for their Conversation as well as for their Actions,” will the more clearly appear.

2. When a sensible, considerate man, thinks habitually upon his own nature; upon his Being, faculties, and enjoyments; as all  
derived



derived from the bountiful hand of the supreme universal Father; and has his heart possessed with a just idea of the obligations incumbent upon him, towards such a Creator, Benefactor, and Preserver; his tongue will, almost necessarily, be governed by his sentiments; his words will seldom or never disagree, with the apprehensions of his religious mind.

Whenever you hear him speak concerning God, he expresses himself in terms of the highest reverence for the very name, corresponding to the divine nature and perfections represented by it. He will not invoke that sacred name, upon trivial occasions; nor ever mention it in any cases, but in such only as are solemn and needful.

If he discourses concerning Providence, or the divine Word, Laws, and Will; he does it with a propriety and gravity of language, becoming the dignity of the subject; with all the strength of reason, all the gift of argument, wherewith that same Providence has endued him.

When he disputes about any points in religion (which he never appears forward to do) he will use no expressions, that discover a want of humanity, good-nature, and christian cha-

city. His speech will be calculated to edify and inform every one, but to offend, or prejudice, none.

Whenever he talks with other men upon indifferent, common, or wordly affairs; his honest principles give suitable vent to his mouth, and the love of truth will direct his tongue. This is the man, whom you may always trust; in whom you are always safe. His positive word and plain assertion, his yea and his nay, work upon his conscience with the power of an oath: and he never needs rashly appeal to God, because he is an upright man.

Having nothing dissolute, no licentious or unchaste desires, in himself; he takes all possible care, that what he speaks may raise no such in others, his fellow-creatures.

He looks upon himself, and all around him, with a candid, impartial eye; as all liable to errors and imperfections. Though his genius therefore be as bright, his wit as finely pointed, as that of any other person; he ever aims it to please, to entertain and improve his companions, but never to vex or discompose the heart of any one. His arrows never strike with malignant poison. He disdains



gains the thought, of setting forth his own abilities, by throwing disgrace and contempt upon the men he converses with.

So likewise, if ever you know him concerned in any debate about matters of right, or injuries received; you will hear nothing from him, that tends to "stir up anger;" but, "with a soft reply, he turneth away wrath."

Again; the words of a truly good man, give us no trouble, to interpret them; no uneasy fears, that we shall find them false, dubious, dark, and designing. No! They are the genuine picture of his manners and his mind. They issue from a clear spring---from a real regard to his own honour, joined with the fear of God, and the love of his neighbour.

Once more; a virtuous disposition yields a man so much inward contentment, and makes him so "satisfied from himself;" that his next delight must be, to see, or to hope, that all others are like him. His tongue therefore rejoiceth to commend, or admire; but slander and defamation are arts, which it cannot possibly want, which it must everlastingly abhor.

To finish the present topick. This man will always use the "lip of friendship." His words may reprove you, because his heart

desires to reform you : they may applaud you, because he wishes to make you still better. But his very "wounds are faithful :" and he loves you too well, to flatter, or deceive you.

These are the virtues of the tongue, the moral graces of speech. And I am sure the person, in whom you may imagine them to be found, or by whom they are, though but moderately, practised, already begins to shew himself to you in the fairest light. So that the "reasons why such a conduct of the tongue" "should be one chief article of his justification, as the contrary would be of his condemnation," will readily meet with your free assent.---'To set these reasons before you,' was the Second Part of my first proposal.

II. Some people may pretend they think it hard, that mere words should subject us to the severity of the Divine Judgment. "Words," say these men, "are light and airy matters, that pass away like the wind, without any hurtful influence. They frequently proceed from no previous malice, or mischievous design. The tongue often contracts an habit of speaking passionately, where the mind does not intend wickedly."

Now



Now here, as in many similar cases, we wilfully run into a gross mistake. Those unguarded and indecent speeches, which come with the least rancour or premeditation, have, confessedly, the least guilt. But this is the very utmost, you can say in their behalf--- that "they are not altogether so criminal, as others may be:" since criminal they most undoubtedly are, for these two plain reasons: First, because they are the offspring of a loose, ill-governed mind: Secondly, because they not only are the occasion of more and more evil in the same mind, but spread that evil in the minds of other men.

No creature can be ignorant, that "It is not properly the mouth, which sinneth: it is the heart, from which the mouth speaketh." Had you not long ago shaken off all pious thoughts, all habitual reverence for the nature and attributes of your God; you could never dare to blaspheme his holy name, or to talk ludicrously about his holy word, or his providence.

Were you not previously defiled in your desires, and inwardly corrupt in your inclinations; there would "no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth."

If your heart were kept innocent, tender, and compassionate; your wit, or your merriment, would never carry gall and bitterness along with it.

How can you debase yourself, to utter lying, or deceitful words; without first spoiling your taste and love, of that amiable thing called truth?

You would never suffer your lips to defame the least man, nor to flatter the greatest; had you not shamefully suppressed and smothered in your breast, every virtuous principle, of charity, humanity, and honour,

To be short. Speech is nothing but the child of thought, the interpreter of the Will; and evil-speaking is the propagation of the vices, bred in the mind. It is the fruit of the tree. If you make the tree bad, there is all the reason upon earth, that you should answer for the badness of the fruit.

Then again; recollect, I beseech you, what I remarked to you just now; namely, that Wicked words are not only the effect of Sin; but will moreover, be the certain, infallible cause of it; both in the speaker himself, and in those that are about him, or near him,

The



The very voice and sound of evil things, when made familiar to your ear, will wear off your prejudice against them; will lessen the veneration you had conceived, for the opposite virtues; and, by imperceptible degrees, will reconcile you to the vices, which your words describe.

Thus, for example: What is the direct, the natural consequence, of all impious jesting upon religion, but to seduce the minds of the "unlearned and unstable," from the attention they owe to that important subject! to quell their fears, and heighten their presumption! to damp the authority of the Greatest Thing in your judgment, when once you have learnt to play upon it with your tongue, or to deride it in your fancy and imagination.

So likewise: When you lavish your precious wit in ingenious obscenity, or in artful strains of satire and censoriousness; the stop is not made, at your words. By no means! Those words will fly, through the ear, into the heart. And a young person, in the heat of his blood, in the flow of his passions, may possibly forget your ingenious language, but he will retain and hold fast the vices it

conveyed: he will cherish and ripen the ideas, till they are brought forth into action!

So lastly: the false and flattering, the plausible and perfidious tongue, does not, can not, spend itself in the mere wind of speeches, or the froth of a little vain, empty rhetorick. Oh no! It will terminate in the destruction of trade; in the extinction of public credit, as well as of private confidence; in the breach of peace, throughout families, neighbourhoods, and kingdoms!

I may now safely leave you to determine, “Whether there be not as manifest reason, “as strict necessity, that men should hereafter “stand or fall by what they speak, as by what “they act?” Examine the question, in every view, of which it is capable; either with respect to yourselves; to other men; or to God, our universal Governor and Judge.

The purpose, for which the all-wise Creator placed us here, and gave us a rational, moral nature, was this; that ‘His kingdom of righteousness, truth and holiness, might be promoted amongst us;’ that, ‘by carefully observing his laws, and conscientiously practising our several duties in the present life, we might be advanced to higher degrees



degrees of perfection and felicity in a future, eternal state.

When therefore, from a profane temper of mind, and a vicious habit of thinking, you have utterly renounced all awful regard for your Maker; when you have accustomed your mouth, to throw out contempt and blasphemy against Him; and with the very same breath, have blasted the reverence which other men entertained for his sacred Name and ordinances;---can you imagine yourself qualified to inherit that blessed kingdom above, wherein the adoration of Him will be the Heaven, and the celebration of his praises the supreme delight of his glorified servants!

Or when your tongue has diffused the lewdness of your soul, and infected every creature about you with its impure venom; is it possible you can be received into any but that wretched society in another world, where the everlasting plague and punishment will be this; that "he that is unjust, must be unjust still; he that is filthy, must be filthy still."

Again: When your evil conversation, and evil counsel, have obtained their end; when they have drawn your unhappy associates to  
be

be as thoughtless, and as worthless, as yourself; is it equitable, that you should feel no vengeance for depraving and ruining those fellow-creatures, who, but for your ensnaring, fatal lips, might have been now at rest in paradise, and have had their portion among the just.

Or, if your groundless, malicious Slander, has injured an innocent brother, in his fortunes, and worldly affairs; or has wounded a reputation, that is dearer than life; do you, or can you, dream all the while, that “He who made the eye, cannot see” your inhuman actions; or that “He who made the ear, will not hear,” and recompense, your cruel words?

Or if, for carrying on some vile design, you have flattered the wicked in his wickedness; have “sewed pillows to his arm-holes,” as the Scripture speaks; that is, have soothed and encouraged him, in his follies, or iniquities; shall not God, the God of truth, behold it? Shall not the “Judge of all the earth,” finally reward every man, according to such evil words, as well as according to all his evil deeds?

Let



Let me turn the question the contrary way. When with your tongue, guided by the principles of serious piety and a benevolent heart, you have reclaimed your sinful companions, have won them over to godliness, modesty, and sobriety; to such sentiments and behaviour, as will promote their own interest, the interest of religion, the general welfare and happiness of mankind;----Or when, with comfortable words, you lift up the heart that had no comfort, administer counsel and consolation to the afflicted soul;----does not this generous work give you warm and delightful hopes, that you shall receive a blessing from Him, who "ruleth in righteousness?" Would you not think it hard, to be forgotten and forsaken by that God, who is the "God of comfort and love, of mercy and all goodness?"

I shall have pretty well gained the purpose, for which I chose the present subject; if I can persuade you to consider, and frequently to reflect upon, the various passages throughout the holy scriptures, that strongly enforce the doctrine of the text. These under-mentioned, are a few among the principal.

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and they that love it, shall eat the fruit

“ fruit thereof. An wholesome tongue is a  
 “ tree of life : but he that hath a perverse  
 “ tongue, falleth into mischief. Whoso  
 “ keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth  
 “ his soul from troubles. God hateth a proud  
 “ look : and a lying tongue is an abomination  
 “ to Him”---says the wise Solomon.

And the royal Psalmist : “ What reward  
 “ shall be given or done unto thee, thou false  
 “ tongue ? Even mighty and sharp arrows,  
 “ with hot burning coals !” that is, the  
 acuteſt, and moſt exemplary, of puniſh-  
 ments. And again ; “ He that delighteth  
 “ in curſing, it ſhall come unto him : he  
 “ that loveth not bleſſing, it ſhall be far from  
 “ him. So again ; “ The Lord ſhall cut off  
 “ all deceitful lips, and the tongue that  
 “ ſpeaketh proud things.”

And in the New Teſtament, more eſpeci-  
 ally : “ Let no corrupt communication pro-  
 “ ceed out of your mouth : but that which  
 “ is good, to the uſe of edifying. Let all  
 “ bitterneſs, and wrath, and clamour, and  
 “ evil-ſpeaking, be put away from you, with  
 “ all malice. Fornication, and all uncleaneſs,  
 “ let it not once be named amongſt you, as  
 “ becometh ſaints : neither filthineſs, nor  
 “ fooliſh



“ foolish talking and jesting. If any man  
 “ among you seem to be religious, and bri-  
 “ dleth not his tongue ; this man deceiveth  
 “ his own heart, and his religion is vain. In  
 “ many things we offend all. If any man of-  
 “ fend not in word, the same is a perfect man.”

These, and numberless other similar scrip-  
 tures, which may easily be found in almost  
 every page throughout your Bible, speak aloud  
 the importance of the argument.

Finally then, Brethren ; if ye will be your  
 Saviour’s disciples indeed ; if ye have any real  
 sense, or proper belief, of this his solemn  
 warning, that “ by your words ye shall be  
 “ justified, and by your words ye shall be  
 “ condemned ;” let it be your constant en-  
 deavour to demonstrate that belief, through  
 your whole life and conversation---in your  
 gay, and in your graver hours ; in company,  
 and in business ; in all your dealings and  
 transactions abroad ; before your children,  
 relations, and servants, at home !

To the King Eternal---

S E R M O N

"foolish talking and joking. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bideth not his tongue; this man deceiveth his own heart, and his religion is vain. In many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."

These, and numberless other similar scriptures, which may easily be found in almost every page throughout your Bible, speak aloud the importance of the argument.

Finally then, Brethren: if ye will be your Saviour's disciples indeed; if ye have any real sense or proper belief of this his solemn warning, that if by your words ye shall be justified, and by your words ye shall be condemned; let it be your constant endeavour to demonstrate that belief, through your whole life and conversation---in your day, and in your graver hours; in company, and in solitude; in all your dealings and transactions abroad; before your children, relations, and servants, at home!

To the King Eternal--- Amen.

S E R M O N



## SERMON XX.

DEUTERONOMY XXX. 19.

*I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing : therefore choose life.*

**S**INCE life is the foundation of happiness, and since happiness is the only end for which life can be valuable ;---when you consider what an innate desire all sensible as well as rational Beings have of the former, and that they make the latter the constant object of all their actions ;---you may possibly wonder with yourselves, ‘ How such a creature as man should so generally fail of the very enjoyments he was designed for ;---that he should be formed by nature for the noblest pleasure ; and yet that, in the event, pain should be the portion of so many among our species.’

The

The observing this sad effect, without considering the proper cause, has led several persons into dangerous mistakes.

Some have concluded (at least have suspected) that the world cannot be the work of such an all-wise, all-powerful and good Agent, as we call God. Or that, if there be a first Author of all things; yet the care and government of them is left at random, as a business too troublesome, or beneath his concern. Upon the whole, that the appearance of so much evil at present, with the prospect of so much wretchedness hereafter, betoken something greatly deficient, either in human nature itself, or in that providential hand which is supposed to order and to direct it.

The words of Moses, which I have now read to you, may easily be adapted to the solution of this difficulty, and to the removal of our doubts. They are a solemn appeal to Heaven and Earth (to all intelligent Beings throughout the Universe) that "God, as supreme Lord of the Jewish People, had done every thing towards their real welfare, becoming his own moral character; -- by giving them his divine law, with the knowledge of Good and Evil; by directing them to happiness,



"happiness, and denouncing the misery that  
 "would follow their disobedience; by re-  
 "ferring Both to their own free choice; by  
 "willing, desiring, exhorting, that they might  
 "make this choice a wise and a dutiful  
 "one."

If the argument contained in the Text, be abstracted from the particular relation it bears to the Jewish Nation, and be applied to Christians, or to men at large;---if, taking it from temporal, you extend it to spiritual, moral, and eternal concerns;----it will gather new force, will gain stronger light, both in its premises and conclusion.---What I purpose therefore, is to shew you,

I. That Almighty God, throughout his whole dispensation with christians, and with all mankind, has made the amplest provision for, has discovered the most earnest desire of, our present as well as final felicity---He has, universally, "set before us life and death."

II. That, though He sincerely wishes our happiness; it is absolutely requisite, that He should leave the conditions and the means of obtaining this happiness, as matters of our own careful, prudent choice: "Choose life."

From these two heads, I shall infer,

III. The unpardonable perverseness betrayed by those men, who, under the fairest offers, the fairest opportunities of life, abuse their liberty, and choose death.

I, God Almighty, in the character of our Maker, has acted every part, and done every thing for us, that can bespeak his paternal regard to our good. Under whatever view or circumstances you survey human nature, this truth will present itself in the clearest light.

As sensible creatures, we are supplied with full as many senses, as this "earthly tabernacle" can require; and with objects proper to gratify those senses. The eye and the ear, the taste, and every organ—what a profusion of varieties have they, for their entertainment! the best and sweetest of which delights, are common to us all!

And because the regulation of these pleasures is the trial of our virtue, that equally concerns our interest and our duty, what wise, what salutary measures are taken, to keep us within due bounds! while, by the very construction of our bodies, by the whole course of providence and our own experience, we are taught, that "Temperance is the only way, either truly to relish, or lastingly to



“enjoy, these blessings; that debauchery and  
“excess, are the bane of life, the hastening  
“of death.” This plain lesson of Nature,  
is the voice of God himself; the Voice,  
wherein He calls to us, and lets us know,  
that “He hath set before us life and death.”  
By annexing pain to intemperance, and  
sprightly health to a moderate use of his gifts,  
does he not most manifestly admonish, does  
He not charge us, to “choose the blessing,  
“and refuse the curse?”

Again: Consider what, and how much is  
done, toward the happiness of governments;  
for the general benefit and preservation of  
societies! What dispositions are implanted  
in us, to humanity, to every social virtue!  
By how many arts and sciences, by what in-  
geniety, honour and fidelity, are we able, if  
we were but willing, to improve conversation,  
to make neighbourhood agreeable, to promote  
commerce, to raise kingdoms into a state of  
glory, and of peace! And when luxury and  
licentiousness are known, in all fact, in all  
history, to have been the subversion of every  
Body Politic, that encouraged, or even suf-  
fered them; while, on the other hand, in-  
dustry and frugality have never failed to be

the sources of plenty and prosperity; what is this, but the very maxim delivered from Heaven; that "Righteousness exalteth a Nation, that Sin is a reproach to any People?"

If we pursue the same inquiry concerning man, as a religious creature; as under certain obligations of duty towards his Creator, and in rational expectation of being called upon by Him to answer for his behaviour; how evidently will appear God's gracious desire of our spiritual, everlasting, felicity!

To demonstrate his Being, and his Providence, He has laid his works before us. The order, beauty, harmony, and magnificence, of the creation; the wonderful agreement of causes and effects; the divine nature, and our own; are all spread open, not only for our pleasing contemplation, but for our necessary instruction. Our duty is conveyed to us, in the very dictates of our own hearts. Virtue and vice, with all their consequences, are conclusions, not obscure, or far-fetched, but easy and level to the meanest capacities; being the result of common understanding, uncorrupted, and honestly improved. Our just hopes and our fears, our best reflections and strongest apprehensions,

point



point them out to our most serious consideration. Therefore, as St. Paul judiciously argues, “the Heathens themselves were inexcuseable, for not seeing the things of God; because God had, from the beginning, shewed them his eternal power and Godhead.”

But if it be objected, that ‘Mens reason has been clouded, by vice, ignorance, and superstition;’ God has abundantly supplied that defect, with his own exprefs revelation.

There, the uncertainties of human philosophy are resolved, and reduced to simple truths: the original precepts of right reason are revived, and re-established by divine authority.

That the sense of our former guilt, may not terrify us, or deter us from seeking after God; a Saviour and a Redcemer is sent to us; a free pardon of all past offences is proclaimed, upon conditions becoming the honour of divine government, and besitting the state of mankind.

Moreover: To influence our practise, to restrain us from whatever is evil; not only the purest and plainest laws are given us, but sanctions are likewise added, for enforcing the observance of them. The most glorious

Y;

rewards

rewards are promised, the most awful punishments denounced.

And to silence all pretences about the difficulty of performing what is enjoined us; the christian commands are displayed in the unexceptionable light of lovely and bright examples. Human virtues are made to shine upon us, in human life; in the lives of holy men, who had "like passions with ourselves;" in the sufferings of Apostles and Martyrs; in the actions and conversation of the blessed Jesus himself, our supreme Teacher and Lawgiver.

But one thing more, I think, needs be urged, for evincing God's absolute, impartial regard, to the happiness of men: namely, his own pathetic, repeated declarations of it, in his sacred word. These chapters of Moses, from which the text is taken, are an eternal monument of divine tenderness towards the Jewish Church, even with an eye to their temporal, or worldly felicity. But the prophetic writings abound with instances of sublimer, of nobler concern; that reach beyond the present life, into a future one. Let the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, serve for a sample. How majestic, and yet how compassionate, are the words of God there!

Al



“All Souls are mine: the soul that sinneth, It shall die”---it shall die, it cannot but die, because it has wilfully and presumptuously forfeited its Creator's love. “But,” says God, “have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not that he should return from his ways, and live? Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your abominations; make you a new hearty and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel! For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth: wherefore turn yourselves, and live!”

It is remarkable in this place, that men are called upon, to turn themselves: whereas in other passages of Scripture, their conversion is ascribed to God: “Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord; and we shall be turned.” But the Scripture itself, as well as your own common sense, informs you, that God's converting men, can only signify, his kindly vouchsafing them sufficient light and opportunities to repent. Therefore, in the twenty-fourth chapter of the same prophet, we are told more plainly, both what God himself does,

respecting this case, and what He requires from man. "Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged; thou shalt not be purged any more." That is, "Since you have shamefully defeated all the methods I have prescribed for your reformation and recovery; you shall enjoy them no longer." Accordingly,

II. The Second Proposition contained in the Text, is; that "Though God does thus sincerely desire our happiness; yet it is indispensably necessary, that He should leave the Attainment of this happiness, to our own industry, and as matter of our own careful, wise choice---Choose life."

Which truth is most obvious, whether you consider it with relation to God, or to ourselves.

That God might establish a kingdom of righteousness, by the voluntary obedience of rational subjects, imitating Him their great example, and blest in return with his favour; this, and this only, is the end for which the world was created. The stars might shine, the planets might roll about the heavens, through all eternity: but without reasonable creatures to inhabit and contemplate upon them,



them, to employ themselves in serving and adoring their Maker; God could have no glory, his creation could have no value!

Now it is self-evident, that without liberty, there could be no moral virtue; that without a possibility of sin and misery, our obedience would be nothing but blind fatality, our happiness could be no reward at all.

Lastly: Without the power of choice, and a sense of our own discretion in directing that choice; the very joys of Heaven would want the main ingredient, which endears all joys, and gives them sweetness. "To be utterly unconscious, " that you ever did any thing " worthy of a crown; would unspeakably diminish its lustre, even in your own eyes.

If any man therefore inquires, " Why does " not God bestow immortality as a free gift, " on his creatures? Why should Divine " Goodness set a price of service upon it? " Why, in short, should there be any such " things, as wickedness and punishment?" ---

Let the following answer satisfy him. " The " natural World moves by compulsion: the " moral World can neither be governed, nor " be happy, but by a right use of its own liberty. Eternal life is a gift truly free; though " not

not like what arbitrary human monarchs, often confer upon their favourites; without either knowing their qualifications, or regarding their merits. No! God's grace in the salvation of his faithful servants, will appear, by his giving them a reward, not without any desert at all, but infinitely above all that they can deserve, or ask, or think?

III. Nothing now remains, but the last Article, as a conclusion from the two foregoing ones: namely, that "The sole cause of men's final unhappiness, is their abusing their liberty, by choosing death before life: And to shew you, wherein this absurd choice consists."

No man can be understood to prefer death and misery for their own sakes, or upon their own account. We all seek what we call good; and follow it as invariably, as a stone falls to the ground. The mischief lies in the wrong, perverse judgment, we make about it, and about the means that lead to it. Here is room for wisdom, or for error; for deliberate virtue, or obstinate vice; for "blessing, or a curse."

We are composed of reason and passions: the objects around us, present themselves to Both: and to keep the latter in due subjection



tion to the former, is our grand business, our grand obligation. We have a multiplicity of temptations, of external pleasures; designed by Providence to exercise, and to prove us. The prudent enjoyment of which, will entitle us to superior pleasures hereafter. Or we must give up the one, for a foolish indulgence of the other. And how foolish indeed is such an indulgence! the indulgence of lusts, which Nature herself has stamped with the character of folly, by the mixture of pain that cleaves close, even to their present gratification!

Some vices enervate our bodies, till they kill the very appetites they raise. Others stab our reputation; or ruin our fortunes, and worldly affairs. And what ruins the estates of private families, goes forward, in direct steps, to the overthrow of kingdoms. Some crimes lay us under the lash of human laws: and we become odious, unfit to live, by pursuits, whereby we madly purposed to be happy. So the Murderer and the Adulterer lose the repose of the night, the peace and comforts of the day: the Tyrant plans a scheme, that ends in his own destruction: the Epicure and the Libertine, are digging their own graves.

Yet,

Yet, through inconsideracy, through a  
 foolish attachment to a darling humour, and  
 the force of inveterate habit, men persist in  
 all this misconduct; while universal reason,  
 seconded by every page of scripture, cries  
 aloud, that 'The contrary practises would  
 be the grace of their persons, the credit and  
 ornament of their present, the security of  
 their future and immortal state.'

After all that has passed upon this subject,  
 you shall be detained no longer, than while I  
 beg your attention to one single remark.

"You see here an infallible rule, by which  
 every creature may try his own case, and  
 know how it will fare with him in another  
 world."

As many among mankind, from Adam to  
 this day, as can justly make it their plea, that  
 they have never had the choice of Life and  
 Death fairly proposed to them; that they  
 have unavoidably been educated, as well as  
 born, in ignorance; that their notions of  
 God, and of his true faith, have been pre-  
 judiced by bad Teachers, or corrupted by art-  
 ful Priests;---for all such persons, the Su-  
 preme Judge will make a merciful allowance,  
 and will do them right.

But



## S E R M O N IX.

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But if amidst some errors (since no mortal is exempt from errors or infirmities) it has been your lot, in the main, essential points of duty, to have had your way lightsome and clear ;---if you have been blest with an understanding, decently cultivated ; with a conscience, never blinded or violated, except by your own voluntary sins :---if you have never been debarred from reading the pure word of God ; never seduced to put your trust in empty ceremonies, ridiculous penances, and impious absolutions ;---but have been warned by watchmen so tolerably honest, as to assure you, that you must build your hope of salvation upon yourselves, upon your own good works ;---and yet, against all this evidence, you wilfully choose vice before virtue, " cursing before blessing, death before life ;" ---if such, I say, shall prove to be your case (as I pray God it may not) when you come to receive your final doom, you will feel and confess, with unutterable sorrow, the fulfilling of the wise man's words : " God made not death ; neither hath He pleasure in the destruction of the living. For He created all things, that they might have" (might enjoy and prolong) " their Being. But

" ungodly

“ungodly men, with their words and works,  
“called it to them, and made a covenant with  
“it. And therefore they are worthy to take  
“their part in it.”

## To the King Eternal---



## S E R M O N XXI

2 PETER i. 4.

*Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

**T**HE force and connection of these words, will presently appear, if we only turn back to the preceding verse. “His divine power,” says the Apostle, “hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him” (Christ) “who hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby” (by which religion of Christ---in which gospel-scheme of virtue and happiness) “are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these” (by their influence, or good effect, upon you)

“ye

"ye might be partakers of the divine nature;  
 "having escaped the corruption that is in  
 "the world through lust."--- Now here we  
 must observe Three principal Points.

I. What the promises of the Gospel are :  
 Wherein their exceeding greatness and preci-  
 ousness consists.

II. In what sense the holy Scripture sup-  
 poses, that "Men can partake of God's nature,  
 "or perfections."

III. How these promises in Christ, are  
 understood to work this effect upon us---  
 how they tend to "make us partakers of the  
 "divine nature."--- When these particulars  
 are explained, the Text will the more easily  
 be applied to the rectifying the judgments  
 and morals of Christian people.

I. The Gospel-promises, for promoting  
 virtuous behaviour and reformation among  
 mankind, are expressed in a great diversity of  
 terms ; are set forth under various figurative  
 descriptions. But the substance of them all is  
 comprised in Two capital Articles--- 1. "The  
 "pardon of sin:" 2. "The enjoyment  
 "of a future, immortal life."

1. Some persons may imagine the doctrine,  
 that "God will forgive the sins of men upon  
 "their



“their sincere repentance,” to be a matter so intuitively clear, from considering his nature and attributes, as a merciful Creator and Governor over us; that there could be no necessity, no occasion at all, for his sending an express Messenger, to acquaint us with so obvious a truth. But this notion, let me tell these people, is very erroneous, very imperfect.

For though the divine mercy (which the mere light of reason, rightly pursued, would discover) might give a man fair ground of hope, that his correcting his vices, or amending his life, will both be acceptable to God, and beneficial to himself; yet it is still but a hope, a rational presumption. It amounts to no absolute proof. It neither did, nor could remove, the doubts, and uneasy suspicion, which possessed the minds of many respectable Heathens; who were no strangers to this argument, but had made considerable advances in moral and philosophical knowledge. St. Paul therefore truly says, concerning these Gentiles; that, “Through fear of death, they were all their life-time subject to bondage.”

The whole lies here---A man’s “forsaking his former evil ways,” and discharging his

duty for the future, is nothing more, than what he is then indispensably obliged to do. It makes no satisfaction, is no atonement (properly speaking) for actual crimes that are past. It will unquestionably secure him, from further punishment. Nay, it will probably alleviate the punishment already due. But whether it will entirely appease the divine displeasure, and for ever cancel the just debt; is by no means demonstrable. All that can be expected from a wise and righteous Governor, is, never to inflict more than the offence deserves; to observe an exact proportion, between the fault and the penalty. But whether it may be right in Him, wholly to forgive, and not to punish at all; is what human reason can never gather, with full assurance.

Hence you find, that the Gospel-Revelation is elegantly styled, by the sacred writers, glad tidings----“good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” This is the meaning of the original word in the Greek: and our old Saxon word Gospel, signifies welcome news. For it proclaims “Peace on earth, and good-will towards men.” It brings you the News of an  
almighty



almighty Friend, who comes from heaven to deliver you from your sins; from the slavery, and from the punishment, of them.

Thus is this first branch of the christian promises, great and precious.

And what I have remarked upon it, will illustrate that passage in the eleventh chapter of the Acts, where God is said to "grant the Gentiles repentance unto life." God's granting men repentance, does not imply, what some modern Enthusiasts would pretend to understand by it---' His producing a mechanical conversion in their hearts, by a violent, senseless, operation upon them.' No! It means God's gracious declaration, that, 'If we freely and honestly amend our lives, He will mercifully accept such amendment; will make it available to the pardon of our past offences.'

2. The Second Branch of the Gospel-Promises, exhibits a still more ample idea of their greatness and importance. It is the promise of a Future Life; as Life, in scripture, denotes complete happiness, with every delightful circumstance, which can accompany it.

This future life will not be the mere continuance of existence, after death; though the desire even of that, is deeply implanted in every human breast. Nor will it be the prolonging of the bare animal life, with all those passions, those sensual appetites, which we now carry about us. But it will be the life and perfection of our spiritual, intellectual part; a state of enlarged understanding; of a well-regulated will; of pure, uncorrupt, inclinations; of wise desires; of entertainments and employments, truly pleasant, truly becoming the rational soul. Such is the life, which the Gospel has offered to us; which is "reserved in Heaven for us!"

You may add many particular considerations, that will much contribute to enhance its value.

The promise of it is not attended with the uncertainty, too frequent in the promises made by men, nay by great men, even by princes themselves; who can deceive, and be deceived, as well as other mortals. But your hope of the future, celestial bliss, is placed in that "God, who cannot lie." It was obtained for you, by the life and death  
and



and atonement of his Ever-blessed Son. It is fixed upon a foundation, strong as the love which God bears to his own "Beloved, in whom we are accepted," and never-failing as the truth of Him, who is truth itself.

A life like this, would be a great, a noble gift, even if it lasted but a few years. Its being given to a Sinner, though a repenting one, makes it a mercy, worthy indeed of Heaven! Should you add to it a million, or only a thousand years; how would the bounty be magnified, in your grateful apprehension! But when once you join eternity to it, all is over----You are lost, in the imagination of your own felicity; and Greatness itself is swallowed up, in the illimitable Ocean!

II. Let us now consider the end, proposed by these Gospel-Promises. Their design is, to render us "partakers of the divine nature;" or to improve our minds, our tempers and dispositions, till they become a faint, a distant representation, of the Divine Mind.

For your own common sense will abundantly convince you, that "being partakers

“of the divine nature,” does not mean any similitude or affinity, which we can possibly bear to God’s natural attributes. It has respect only to his moral perfections; and even to them, under every due allowance for the limited capacities of frail, finite creatures.

In comparison with his almighty power, which “commanded the light to shine out of “darkness;” all created Beings, are equally and infinitely below Him. In unbounded knowledge, in unerring wisdom, neither Angels nor Archangels bear any proportion to Him: and “He chargeth his Angels “with folly.”

But in his justice, truth, and goodness; in his mercy, forbearance and long-suffering; all intelligent Beings, throughout the universe, may imitate Him. In these, it is both their duty, and their glory, to be like Him. He is the original, the standard and pattern, of moral excellency. And his conduct towards all his free, reasonable creatures, in loving, pardoning, and doing them good, should be their universal law, their universal example, throughout all their dealings, intercourse, or conversation, with each other.

And



And thus far, many pious, learned Heathens, had right sentiments concerning religion! which, indeed, can hardly escape any considerate, or tolerably cultivated, mind. They held, that "To do good, is to act like the all-perfect Being;" that "To be virtuous, is to resemble the Gods." And again, "The best worship," says one of them, "which you can pay your Maker, is to be like Him in your temper."

Accordingly, the holy scriptures urge it upon us, as the noblest incitement to virtue; that "God, in whose image we were created, is himself supremely good;" and that, "if we serve, relieve, and forgive our brethren, we shall be the children of our Father who is in heaven; shall be perfect, as He is perfect."

This imitation of the divine moral character, is stiled by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, being "partakers of God's holiness;" and by St. Peter, here in the Text, being "partakers of his divine nature;" which therefore manifestly signify the same thing.

III. How, or after what manner, God's promises conduce to the renewing in us this

but

Z 4

resemblance

resemblance of Himself, will be readily apprehended.

Promises and persuasives, denunciations and threatnings, can no otherwise affect a rational, free, Agent; than by rousing his attention, awakening his fears, animating and spurring him to diligence in virtuous pursuits. The Gospel-Motives will appear most effectual to these ends, upon every heart that does not wilfully harden itself against them, in whatever light they are placed. For example,

Man is a creature, that must be encouraged to virtue, by the hope of a reward; by the prospect of some good, that will accrue from it. Now Life is the basis of all good; the assurance of a happy Life, includes every encouragement, that can be conceived to engage a creature in any action or design.

Again: Man was formed with affections, as well as reason; and both must be wrought upon, if you would bring him to a voluntary, cheerful practice, of his duty. Therefore the divine promises, not only contain the greatest blessings; but are given to us with so much tenderness, with such endearing circumstances; and the happiness



we shall enjoy hereafter, is painted in figures and allusions so extremely proper to win our affections; that even God himself could add nothing more, for raising us to the love and exercise of all goodness.

We are promised, that if we sincerely endeavour to resemble our Creator, to be holy as He is holy; He will receive and embrace us, as his children--will make us heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; in a kingdom which cannot be moved; in an inheritance undefiled, that fadeth not away. We are promised, that if, to the best of our power, we copy the divine perfections in this life, We shall be rewarded with another life, wherein all our perfections will be exalted, all our faculties refined; wherein we shall forever grow in grace and felicity, by growing continually more and more like Him, by seeing Him, and being blest with his presence in which there is fulness of joy.

Thus our pleasure, our interest, and our duty, are everlastingly united. Each part of our composition, is wisely considered. Our most ingenuous passions are consulted, together with our reason. God has done every thing, befitting a consummate governor over  
moral

moral subjects, that can induce us to "partake  
 "of his holiness," and thereby of his hea-  
 "venly happiness."

Having thus sufficiently explained the  
 Text, I would now make an application of  
 it, in a few short observations. And,

From the promises which God has giv-  
 en us in scripture, and their expediency to-  
 wards a religious life; you see the vanity of  
 those fantastical, affected Moralists; who  
 maintain, that, "The love of ourselves, The  
 "serving God with a view to our own ad-  
 "vantage, or in hope of any return from Him;  
 "destroys the essence of virtue, or at least  
 "greatly diminishes its lustre and purity." As if it were possible to separate Virtue, from  
 the final advantage of her Followers! As if  
 the very reliance upon God; the hope and  
 trust in Him, for our future recompense; an  
 hope, that leads us to the imitation of his  
 divine perfections; that makes us "partakers  
 "of his divine nature; --- as if this, I say,  
 were not itself a virtue; and the parent of the  
 most generous, the most sublime, virtues!

How can it be improper, in truth how  
 can it but be highly requisite, that a creature,  
 whose appetites are at continual war with his  
 judgment,



judgment, who is in daily, in hourly danger, from the influence of temptations, of bad examples, should be actuated and fortified by hopes and by promises.

When St. Paul therefore tells us, that Moses refused the honours of the Egyptian Court, because "he had respect unto the recompence of the reward;"---when He bids the persecuted Hebrew Christians, "look unto Jesus, and to his glorious appearing;"---nay, when He affirms, that Jesus himself "endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the Joy that was set before him;"---in all these declarations, can you suppose the Apostle means to throw any disparagement upon human Virtue? No! those persons disparage Her rather, who imagine it at all more inconsistent with goodness in man, to hope for a reward; than with goodness in God, to be the "rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Let me remark, from the foregoing explanation of the Text; "How easy, how obvious a thing it is, to enter into the genuine spirit and design of all saving religion, of Christianity in particular."

It is not a new and untried system, but a system of common sense and common duty.

If you recollect what has passed, you will see, beyond a doubt, that Revelation was not intended to fill mens heads with speculative notions and abstruse doctrines, nor their hearts with zeal for the external forms or ceremonies of worship; but to better their morals, to direct their practice; that "they may become partakers of the divine nature, by keeping themselves pure from the corruptions which are in the world through lust:"  
 2dly: As this is the grand object of God's holy word and promises; hence every man may deduce a safe rule, whereby to measure all his hopes, all his reliance, upon those promises; and to judge how far such hopes are well or ill founded.

There is no Christian, who has the least meaning in professing the Gospel, but feeds his mind with a prospect, that he shall receive some share of its benefits. And you would think Me very severe, were I to exclude any one of you, from so precious an expectation. But, at the same, it infinitely concerns you all, to be well assured upon what ground you stand. Do you verily trust in God, for the blessings of another life? Examine that trust of yours, as you would the

the



the quality of a tree, by the fruits it has produced. What good effects has your hope had upon you? Has it quickened your endeavours to merit the blessings you wish to receive? Has it made you solicitous to be partakers of God's holiness here, that you may be more so hereafter? Has the sense of his love, truth, and mercy, taught you to "love your fellow-creatures;" "to speak the truth with your neighbour;" "to shew mercy, even to your enemy?" If such be your case, you may indeed have hope; "a hope, full of immortality!"

But if your confidence be nothing better than this---that 'You shall get to heaven, some way or other, with all your lusts about you;' and shall be accepted in Christ, though you never were a follower of God;---be not deceived! For however easily you may delude Yourself; God cannot possibly thus be mocked!

All your other accomplishments may render you a man of the world, a man of business, or a man of science: but heaven will admit the Good man only.

And had you the knowledge of the deepest philosopher, or the learning of the ablest scholar

scholar that ever lived ; could you trace out the wondrous motions of all the heavenly bodies, the orbit of every star in the firmament ; nay, could you unfold every sacred mystery, and explain every single text in the book of God ; I will go yet further (but not further than the holy scripture itself carries me) had you faith, to cure all diseases, to cast out devils, or even to remove mountains ; if you could speak with the tongues of men, and of Angels ; still, had you the eloquence without the virtue, and all St. Paul's gifts without St. Paul's charity ; you would be in the exact condition he has so emphatically described---you would " become mere sounding  
" brass, and a tinkling cymbal !"

Turn over your Bible as long as you please, you will find no such Promise, as " Blessed  
" are the learned ;" " blessed are the ingenious : " blessed are the politic." Nor yet, " blessed are the zealots for the articles of  
" their church, or the formalities of devotion." No not even, " blessed are they  
" that prophecy, or they that work miracles,  
" in the name of Christ." But, " blessed  
" are the merciful : for they shall obtain  
" mercy." " Blessed are the pure in heart :  
" for



"for they shall see God." "Blessed are  
"the peace-makers: for they shall be the  
"children of God"---They shall be the  
children of his Kingdom, the children of  
the Resurrection.

To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

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 "for they shall be blessed  
 "the peace-makers: for they shall be the  
 "children of God." They shall be the  
 SERMON XXII

To Him be glory for ever. Amen.  
 Every man  
 it is impossible for man to know  
 one who has never seen him

OUR blessed Lord and Saviour for the  
 ancient prophets, and  
 the "Gospel of peace," the "Gospel of  
 "heaven," the "Gospel of life,"  
 "and love," when in the world of men  
 with the flesh, the body of man,  
 with the flesh, and with the flesh,  
 "they in all God's love and mercy  
 say, this same Jesus whom ye have crucified,  
 "not to lead you into captivity, but  
 that "his doctrine would be the life of  
 "the father, the Father and the Son,  
 that "great offences would come

But let us not miss to think of them  
 SERMON  
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 with



## S E R M O N XXII.

LUKE xvii. 1.

*It is impossible but that offences will come: but  
 wo unto him through whom they come.*

OUR blessed Lord, whose religion by the ancient prophets is stiled “glad tidings,” the “Gospel of peace,” the “kingdom of heaven,” the “kingdom of righteousness and love;” wherein “the wolf should dwell with the lamb; the leopard should lie down with the kid; and none should hurt or destroy in all God’s holy mountain; ---yet, I say, this same Saviour assures us, that He “came not to send peace on earth, but a sword;” that “his doctrine would set the son against the father, the father against the son;” and that “great offences would come.”

But let us not mistake these accounts; or fancy them contradictory, and irreconcilable

with each other. For some of these passages intend only to describe the natural temper, the natural tendency, of the christian doctrine; how peaceable and happy the world would be, provided men would embrace and practise it; what a spirit of unanimity and love it breathes, throughout its whole scheme; how effectually it would answer this gracious design, in all such persons, as did sincerely believe it, and live according to it.

Other of these scriptures, foretell the contrary event, which would actually happen, through the perverseness and iniquity of those men, who can abuse the most signal mercies, can turn Heaven's highest blessings into the deepest curses.

Lastly: Many of the texts abovementioned, speak, and must be understood, not concerning the first reception, not concerning the early progress, of Christ's kingdom or religion; but concerning its full and final completion, here upon earth. When it shall gloriously and universally prevail, in truth and righteousness; when divine providence will make it appear a wonderful and happy contrast, to all the former iniquities of mankind.



In the mean while, the same divine providence confessedly permits, that "great offences come;" which seem to hinder, or prevent, the beneficial effects, that would otherwise flow from this heavenly, charitable, religion.

Since there is nothing, throughout the sacred scriptures, more carefully insisted upon, more solemnly set forth, or more severely forbidden, than the sin of giving offence; I will beg your attention, to what I shall say about it; both as it has affected the Christian Church at large, and particularly as it now affects ourselves, and our own times. But, before I enter into either of these topics; it may not be improper, briefly to explain the language, in which the text is expressed.

"Offences will come"---Our English word Offence, is a very inferior, imperfect translation, of the original phrase, in this and the like places. By offending a Man, we usually mean nothing more than vexing, grieving, or disobliging him. So an offence against God, generally signifies some action, that is repugnant to his known Will, or commands; and which consequently displeases Him.

But, with regard to our Neighbour, this term Offence, in the holy Scriptures, has a less common, and more criminal acceptation. In these writings, it denotes a stumbling-block; any snare, or trap, or impediment, that is laid across a person's way, on purpose to give him a fall; to retard, to stop him, and turn him from his passage.

Accordingly, it represents any act, discourse, doctrine, or behaviour; that is calculated to lessen the esteem, to obstruct the advancement, of true religion, among mankind; --- that not barely frets or discomposes other men, but prejudices them against Christianity, and seduces their minds from a good opinion of it; --- that abates the reverence, they would otherwise entertain for the Gospel; nay, causes them to transgress its precepts, or even to renounce and forsake it.

Thus our Saviour tells his disciples, "All ye shall be offended, because of me, this night," --- "ye shall desert and deny me." So the Pharisees were offended at Him; that is, they disowned, and rejected Him. In the same sense, the Cross of Christ is styled the "offence of the cross;" but is elsewhere more plainly called "a stumbling-block to  
" the



"the Jews, a stone of stumbling, and of a falling"---the Jews, through their wicked ignorance, made it to be so.

Therefore, respecting our conduct, as Christians, towards each other; St. Paul's command, in his Epistle to the Romans, expresses the true, full notion, of our Saviour in the Text. "Let no man," says the Apostle, "put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall" (to fall away, from Christianity) "in his brother's way."

Well; but how must we take our Lord's meaning, when He affirms it to be "impossible, but that offences will come?" Man is a creature endued with freedom of mind, with the knowledge of good and evil, with liberty of willing and acting; and Christians are blest with such abundant light and grace, to direct this liberty;---that surely there can be no strict necessity, for any man to sin! Surely there can be no constraint upon any person, to bring odium and discredit on his holy profession, even by a single enormous crime, much less by a continued series of profligate wickedness!

All this is undeniably true; and demonstrates that the word Impossible, must not

be interpreted in the literal, rigid sense; but only implies a great degree of danger, or difficulty. Which is sufficiently verified, by the sense which the same word bears in other parts of scripture. Thus, When our Saviour declares it impossible, for "a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven;" He immediately tempers his meaning---"How hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God!" And when St. Paul pronounces, concerning an apostate Christian, that "it is impossible to renew him again unto repentance;" reason, facts, and religion itself, will satisfy you, he could design nothing more, than strongly to paint the hazard, the improbability, of such a repentance.

Thus, in the Text: Men are under no fatality, to do evil. And Christians enjoy the best advantages upon earth, for avoiding every instance of scandalous or sinful behaviour. Yet all are men still! And, considering the state of the world; the number of temptations; the infirmities of some people; the passions, the ambition, the wilful obstinacy, of others;---it cannot be expected, it cannot well be supposed, it must not be hoped, but that



that vices will more or less prevail, and that  
 "offences will come."

Having thus illustrated the two capital  
 phrases in the text, let me now proceed to ex-  
 amine this crime of scandalizing religion :

I. By informing you, what were the grand  
 occasions of injury and disreputation to  
 Christianity, during the early ages ; and  
 by making some suitable reflections upon  
 it, in that light.

II. By taking the same matter into con-  
 sideration, with regard to ourselves, and our  
 own times.

III. By remarking the Wo, which our  
 Lord here denounces against all such, as shall  
 be found to have been the Authors of it.  
 "Wo unto him, through whom the offence  
 cometh."

I. No sooner did the pure and peaceable  
 religion of the Gospel appear in the world,  
 but great offences were given, by Believers,  
 as well as Unbelievers : which unspeakably  
 weakened its interest, and salutary influences  
 upon the hearts of men. When the gracious  
 Redeemer "came to his own, his own re-  
 ceived Him not." The Jews, his own  
 people, his own countrymen, were the first

who scandalized his doctrine, and compassed the death of their divine Instructor. They were the ringleaders of all the calumny, misrepresentation, and misery, that befell the men, whom God sent on purpose, to teach them humanity, to preserve them from ruin!

When this same Gospel made its entry into the heathen quarters of the globe, how many established prejudices, what darling passions, what long-applauded vices, had it to encounter! How much blood was spilt, to gain it credit, or even attention, with those sons of darkness and wickedness!

Yet happy, beyond expression, would it have been, if the mischief had ended here! if Christianity had felt no wounds, except from professed enemies! Whereas, alas! offences were as numerous in the Church, as out of it! You cannot look into the New Testament, but you every where see the most melancholy prophecies and descriptions of the offensive spirit, that reigned among the original converts to our holy faith.

The Romans, as well as the Galatians, were all set on fire by a parcel of Jewish Zealots, who would endure no religion, without circumcision, and Jewish ceremonies,

The



## S E R M O N XXII.

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The Corinthians divided themselves into factions and parties, upon frivolous disputes, whether they should follow Christ, or Cephas, or Paul, or Apollos. Though their great Apostle was perpetually cautioning them, against the fatal imprudence of such animosities; though he was perpetually calling upon them, to “walk in wisdom towards them that are without;” to “receive one another, as Christ received us;” to “give no offence in any thing, that the ministry might not be blamed”-----“that infidels might have no just pretence, for speaking evil against Christianity.”

After the Apostles had quitted the stage, the history of giving offences, does not at all improve, or mend upon our hands. It was not long before the Bishops and Pastors, who were to feed the flocks, became tainted with the love of power and pre-eminence. Whence piety decayed, as the lust of rule increased!

Indeed persecution from their public enemies, kept many Christians together; and compelled them to live in something that looked like friendship, or brotherly love. But as soon as ever Kings and Emperors came  
into

into the Church, introducing riches and preferments along with them; instead of dutiful gratitude to God, or the honour of Christ Jesus; what strifes and contentions, what hatred and scandals arose, about "Who were most orthodox;" that is, "Who should be uppermost!" They met in councils, only to squabble, revile, and confound one another. They got the civil powers, to revenge their foolish enmities: and the sword of the Prince usurped the place of the true sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Thus went matters on for some time, in the Eastern parts of the christian world: till a cunning and daring Impostor had the artifice to dress up a new religion, that exactly suited the genius of his ignorant, vicious, disciples. He raised a formidable power. The infatuated Christians, in their quarrels and battles, admitted, nay invited, that power to come in amongst them; where, by a just judgment, it reigns triumphant, unto this day. And all those famous Churches celebrated in the New Testament, Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Smyrna, are long since become poor desolate villages; inhabited by a few wretched, superstitious christians,



Christians, under the merciless oppression of Mahomet and his successors. "They walked not in the light--so their candlestick is removed from them."

Turn your eye now to the Western regions of Christ's Church, during the same period; and mark, how the like scandalous, offensive principles, produced the like pernicious consequences.

While the Eastern Christians were devouring one another, to be all devoured at last by a common adversary; the Roman Empire was dwindling and decaying. The northern nations poured in upon it, with their forces, and their vices. The Roman Bishops, all the time, "fished in these troubled waters;" to get ecclesiastical lawless dominion, over the minds of their fellow-Christians. They attained it at length, by treachery and bloodshed. Then their Successors invented such a set of doctrines, with such a form of worship, as put them into secure possession of mens understandings, estates, and consciences. Which doctrines continue, to this hour, an effectual scandal; that will keep both the Jew and the Mahometan in an utter abhorrence of Christ's religion. And from  
this

this most flagrant of all offences, this basest as well as cruelest of all bondage, the glorious Reformation has set this happy nation free.

I have drawn up the preceding summary account of Scandal, as it existed in the christian ages past; with a view to a few reflections, which I think it will afford, for your practical use and instruction.

1, then. "We see here, how much the best and noblest cause is liable to suffer, or to be debarred from success, by the ingratitude and iniquity of mankind; how far the choicest blessings may be turned to evil, and to the reproach of a sinful world. But we are taught also, that none of these sad events, nothing of this ill success, should in the least diminish our veneration for the Gospel, or shock our belief of it."

If ever therefore you hear the following question proposed----'Since so many have been the Scandals and Offences, so few and slender the good influences of Christianity; what advantage has mankind reaped from it; or why might not the world have been quite as happy without it?'--your answer to such a question, is ready, and satisfactory. As reason, understanding, liberty, are, and were always



\* always deemed, the most valuable gifts of  
 \* Heaven, though men from the beginning,  
 \* have notoriously depraved and perverted  
 \* them, by running themselves into idolatry,  
 \* vice, and slavery; just so, had more iniquity  
 \* abounded among Christians, had greater  
 \* numbers sold themselves under sin; yet St.  
 \* Paul's argument stands firm and unshaken  
 \* --- The Law is, nevertheless, holy, just,  
 \* and good. Moreover. As reason and un-  
 \* derstanding have, in the corruptest times,  
 \* been the guide and safeguard of many  
 \* an honest man, so has the Gospel en-  
 \* lightened and saved such numbers of the  
 \* faithful, as will demonstrate at last, that it  
 \* was a mercy, infinitely worthy of the gra-  
 \* cious God to give, and of his lost creatures  
 \* to accept!

But, 2, I beg you will consider, that  
 \* there may possibly be as great folly, and as  
 \* great fault, in unreasonably taking offence,  
 \* as in giving it. For what, if false religion  
 has too long, or too generally, prevailed;  
 are therefore true religion, with all its plain  
 obligations, become null and void? What,  
 if many Christians have worshipped idols;  
 may we therefore innocently commit sacrilege?

If

If whole Churches have sunk themselves into bigotry and darkness; can we, without guilt or shame, refuse to follow the blessed Light that is before us? The case is too evident, to need any reply.

3. Then, let me observe that, "Fatal to the Christian Scheme as these evils may appear; they are really so far from being any objection against our holy religion, that they afford us the strongest proof of its divine origin and authority," Because these are the very things that were exactly foretold, precisely described, most affectionately lamented, by its divine Author himself, by his Prophets, Apostles, and Preachers. The same all-wise Being, who has permitted the offences of ungodly men, has at the same time, and by these same offences, confirmed his Word, in the heart of every pious, intelligent, Christian.

For Who could possibly have foreseen, or pointed out to his disciples, what treatment they should receive in the course of their ministry; what deaths He himself and They should die; what vengeance would fall, when and how it should fall, upon the Jewish Nation, that raised the first offence, the first  
opposition,



opposition, against Him :--- Who could, for many hundred years before the accomplishment, have drawn out in an amazing succession, the various circumstances of the Christian Church; the revolutions and corruptions, it should undergo; the persecutions and apostacies; the times places and people, when where and by whom the whole should be transacted, from their days to the present; --- Who, I say, could possibly do This, but One that was sent by Almighty God, or Such as were taught and inspired by Him?

So then, as the unprosperous state of Christianity, may give us pain to reflect on it; let us take comfort from the remembrance, that ' This very state brings with it the marks of God's own hand, sealing the truth of His and our Gospel!'

4. But lastly: " Let the survey we have taken of the foregoing abuses, most especially direct your thoughts to the divine displeasure, which You yourselves will incur, by scandalizing the Faith, you should re-commend and adorn."

I have laid before you what the New Testament Writers, and those of the ages following, have recorded about this matter, on purpose

purpose to remind you, that "All these things  
 " were written for our sakes, for our ensam-  
 " ples ;" that the same offensive vices, which  
 ruined the primitive churches, which called  
 down the wrath of Heaven upon antient king-  
 doms, will infallibly terminate in the like  
 judgments upon us ! With this sad difference  
 only---that ' As we are favoured with more  
 ' numerous warnings, are more fully instruct-  
 ' ed by the exemplary sufferings of those who  
 ' have gone before us ; our unrepented crimes  
 ' will be the heavier, and our fall the greater !'

To God, only wise--



# S E R M O N XXIII.

LUKE xvii. 1.

*It is impossible but that offences will come: but  
we unto him through whom they come.*

**W**HEN I had explained the two principal as well as more difficult expressions in the Text; and had shewn you, 1, what the scriptures intend by the word offence; 2, what our Saviour means by declaring, “It is impossible but that offences will come;”---I purposed to consider this great crime of “bringing scandal upon religion,” after a general, historical way; or as it existed, in the earlier times of the Christian Church; setting before your eyes, the mischievous consequences which then attended it. From whence I drew a few reflections, that I thought might be serviceable, for your practical admonition and instruction.

The remaining parts of what I at first undertook, are,

II. "To treat this destructive vice, as it  
"is more immediately chargeable upon our-  
"selves, and our own times."

III. To remark the special Wo, which  
"our Lord has here denounced, against all  
"such, as He shall find to have been guilty  
"of it."

II. If we examine the extensive sin of scandalizing religion, or of injuring its reputation, and hindering its advancement among mankind; we shall perceive, that many actions, many instances of behaviour, are common to all ages---the same throughout the primitive days, as in our own. Both Ancients and Moderns have been seen to hurt their Saviour's cause, by a vast variety of conduct--by things indifferent, when indiscreetly managed, or rashly indulged; and by things directly immoral, which should never be indulged at all--by acts committed with a plain design to bring his Gospel into contempt; or else by such as will be certain to do so, amongst ignorant and thoughtless men, though committed with no such express design.

A man



S E R M O N XXIII. 37

A man who runs into unguarded liberties, in matters seemingly innocent, may not only vex or displease another person, but may really cause him to offend, and draw him into evil. Many very honest minds, have but a slender judgment, but a shallow guage of understanding. And the freedoms that you take, respecting points, which they suppose sinful; may embolden them to violate their own consciences. Thus while you, by your knowledge, are rendered fearless and secure; you may, by your example, lead Them into presumption. Whence it often happens, that our foolish zeal about what is no essential article of true religion, occasions men, who are loose and unsettled in their principles, to throw off all concern for any religion whatever.

Among the first Christians, of Rome, Galatia, Corinth, what Offences were given, as well as received, about meats and drinks and festival days! And have not we, I pray you, sometimes, made ourselves the very pictures of those injudicious old zealots; when we were ready to pull one another in pieces, about forms and habits and ceremonies? while the Infidel stood sneering, the Jew laughed,

laughed, and all sensible, tender-minded Believers, were grieved and offended!

How effectually would St. Paul's advice have cured, both Them and Us! "I know," says he, "that the kingdom of God is not  
"meat and drink: I know that an idol is  
"nothing, and that a day is nothing. But,  
"nevertheless, by frequenting idol-feasts my-  
"self, to entice another man thither against  
"his own weak judgment; and so to destroy  
"him, for whom Christ died;---No!" (adds the good Apostle) "I would eat no flesh  
"while the world standeth, rather than make  
"my brother to offend."

Here, now, is a most excellent, a most charitable rule---"A man of understanding,  
"should be cautious how he uses what is  
"lawful; for fear that men of little or no  
"understanding, should stretch it into what  
"is unlawful."

But my principal object in choosing this Text, was; to warn you against those criminal ways of conversation, by which a scandal is Now most frequently cast upon our christian profession---Vices, that I cannot indeed say are peculiar to our age, or to our country; but which, I may without the least



least scruple affirm, are a peculiar reproach to that eminent degree of light, learning, knowledge, and liberty, with which this nation has long been blest. And here, what offence shall I place at the head, or where shall I make an end!

1. Profaneness, or the modish taste of ridiculing things and persons, generally held sacred; seems calculated to scandalize the whole christian cause. Those flights of the tongue, proceed from the very heart; and naturally tend to decoy your companions into the same irreverent, contemptuous opinion, concerning the maxims of piety, with the man that vents them. Now This is to offend indeed, in whatever light you can view it.

For if, on the one side, the air and affectation of Wit, that usually accompanies this manner of discoursing or writing, renders it agreeable, or only tolerable, to some persons; the effect must be, that it will instill and spread the poison of profligate notions; that it will damp the respect, will efface the just regard, which every uncorrupted mind entertains for things serious and important.

Or if, on the other side, it begets that indignation, that abhorrence, which always arises from such occasions, in grave, masculine spirits; how shamefully are they insulted and offended! Who not only ought to be guarded against such treatment, by the laws of God, and the laws of their country: but have an equal right to protection with all other men, from the laws of civil conversation and good breeding.

Take which side you please---Profaneness is such a scandal upon human society, that though I do not wonder some creatures are wild or wicked enough to offer it: I am astonished it should pass unnoticed and unrevenge: not merely where there is a christian power to restrain its wasteful fury, but even where there is so much as the bare name of cultivation or policy, of law or government!

2. Again: What can be more scandalous, either in itself or its circumstances, than the unmanly sin of drunkenness? A sin, whose present effects are so uneasy; and its more distant consequences so ruinous, to individuals, to families, to neighbourhoods; that the lowest tribe of people would disdain so despicable



despicable: a passion, were they not countenanced and led forward by too many precedents of higher degree. In the mean time, wheresoever, or from what source soever, this practice becomes the vogue, and rises into fashion, what tongue can describe the confusion it must spread, over the whole face of Religion, whose glorious purpose is, "The Teaching men to conquer themselves, and their appetites;" "The Inducing us to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world." Further: When some persons talk about gratifying their lusts, or carrying on their lawless intrigues, with a ludicrous turn, in a wantonness of stile, that set decorum and decency at defiance; is it their intention to force their neighbours into lewdness, by putting all modesty out of countenance? Or do they only mean to testify their own aversion from what is good, by designedly affronting it before those, who, they know, hold it in the highest veneration? Upon either and all suppositions, their behaviour is inexpressibly rude, irrational, offensive!

4. What words shall I find, equal to the enormous crime, of blaspheming God's holy

name, by passionate oaths, and violent imprecations----A language, made so habitual to many people, as if it were the first they had learnt from their cradles! This, I confess, may often be done, without any settled determination to anger their Maker, or to scandalize his sacred laws. Yes; I can allow they may not intend "provoking the Lord to anger;" because, I fear, they never think about Him. But let me intreat them to remember, that, whether they intend this or not, the dreadful event is very nearly the same----"A most pernicious and universal scandal is given." For, be they weak brethren, or be they strong; all are injured, all are offended! Persons that understand little, or consider little, about their Creator and their duty towards Him, must necessarily have their awe and fear relaxed, their whole religious idea of the infinite Majesty banished from their minds, by such an audacious familiarity with that tremendous Name. And they who are above being infected by your impiety, are shocked beyond measure by your abuse of That, wherein they place all their devotion, their hope, admiration, comfort, and happiness.

5. I must



5. I must here pass over many other scandalous articles in our conduct: such as the immoderate, raging thirst after riches, heaped up, either to serve no use at all, or (which is yet rather worse) to pamper the pride, vanities, and luxuries of life:---plainly telling to all the world, 'What a common, what an easy thing, it is for a Christian, to set his eyes and his face towards heaven; when his whole heart, all the time, is groveling up on the earth!'

6. I will detain your thoughts with but one branch more, of offensive behaviour, that seems growing (indeed has actually grown) to a formidable height amongst us. I mean, 'The breach of the Sabbath; the general and notorious neglect of God's public worship!'

Mankind are too prone, without any incitement, to disregard their Saviour; to be heedless of the things that concern his honour, and their own future happiness. Whether, then, can you imagine, will all the inferior, all the more ignorant part of them, be carried; if they are encouraged in their ungodliness, by the authority of fashionable and great examples? They will undoubtedly conclude

conclude, "They do nothing amiss;" as long as they act upon a level with the men, who are esteemed so much wiser than themselves! And it is but a poor share of credit, that any institution, whether religious or civil, can hope to acquire; when the very people who should support it, are the foremost in throwing contempt upon its solemn rites and services!

But enough concerning these sad instances of misdemeanour! Let me turn your attention to the *Woe*, which our blessed Redeemer has here pronounced against them.

III. The honest philosophy of an Heathen Moralist might satisfy a man (how lamentable is it, that any who are called Christians, should want to be advertised) that "We were not born for ourselves alone." Consequently we neither do, nor can possibly, live and act for our own personal benefit, or mischief only; but for that of others, perhaps of many others, also. This I say is a lesson, which you may learn from nature, from all human wisdom and experience. So that, if our heavenly Teacher had been quite silent, in the warm precepts He has given us, about "our love of the brethren," and the tenderness



ness due to all mankind: Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, could inform you, that "Whoever conducts himself and his actions, without regard to the failings, or the infirmities, of the world around him; it is pity he ever came into the world."

You cannot converse, I do not say wickedly, but even imprudently, by yourself alone. Your neighbours, at least your companions and associates, will feel it, will be corrupted by it. And if you think about nothing, except 'merely living to your own humour;' you are absolutely unworthy of living at all.

Well; but our good Master, who clearly foresaw what evils would arise, has provided the most effectual means and terrors, to prevent them. He has warned us, that "He will send his Angels; and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things" (all persons) "that offend"---gather them, in a dreadful sense; as you gather weeds, out of your gardens; to be cast away, and perish!

"Wo be to the world," says He, "because of offences"---A menace that has, that cannot but have, a special relation to all the several characters, situations, and employments;

ployments; which afford us opportunities of doing greater good, or more extensive evil, in the present life.

Wo be to that man, or to that community of men, through whom offences come! Wo be to that Church, which depraves the christian doctrine, instead of building up her members in their most holy faith! Wo be to that Minister of the Gospel, whose life brings a scandal upon his sacred function. Wo to that christian Magistrate, whose hands are slack; "who beareth the sword in vain;" who neither "punishes evil doers, nor "gives praise to them that do well." Wo in short to us all, whatever be our office, post, or profession; if we do not carefully learn, and conscientiously discharge, our respective duties; for the glory of our Creator, and the good of our fellow-creatures.

Agreeably to this general threatening, denounced by our Lord; you may read in scripture a particular, chosen vengeance, that will one day be executed upon a certain wicked power, a body of men, for having defiled, persecuted, and scandalized, God's true religion. The sacred Writers call this power the beast, and the little horn of the beast; that



that is, a spiritual usurpation, springing up by small degrees, till at length it subdues the very civil powers. They describe the ten kingdoms (our ten European kingdoms, into which the Roman Empire was broken) as "giving their strength unto this beast;"---submitting to become the dupes and tools of this church-tyranny. But, says the prophet Daniel, "The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, and shall give his body to the burning flames."

St. John, in his Revelation, has expatiated upon this christian prophecy. He has collected together all the triumphs of judgment and divine wrath, proclaimed against Babylon, Egypt, and even Sodom herself, to be unitedly burst upon the head of this Grand Antichrist and Apostate.

Such therefore, in God's appointed time, will be the Downfall of Rome---of that impious Polity, which, throughout the habitable Globe, has thus long perverted the Gospel; has been such a "Monstrous Rock of offence, to the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church of God:"---Which, setting at open defiance her Lord's express command, will not wait

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wait for His determined season, nor let Him  
 “gather the tares out of his kingdom;” but  
 herself profanely dares to “root up and kill  
 “the good wheat along with them”---  
 Demanding “fire from heaven, to destroy by  
 “thousands the lives, which Christ came to  
 “save”---Intoxicated with lawless power,  
 “drunken with the blood of the Saints, and  
 “of the Martyrs of Jesus!”

Thus do the Holy Scriptures speak con-  
 cerning Offenders, in the gross, or in their  
 public capacity.

But never let us forget, that each indivi-  
 dual, without exception, must undergo his  
 bitter share of punishment, proportioned to  
 the guilt he himself has incurred, by giving  
 offence---to the guilt, I say, he has incurred,  
 not only by his own personal sins, but by  
 drawing others into sin, by “leading the  
 “blind from the right way”---his servants,  
 his friends, his relations, and his very chil-  
 dren, from the way of salvation.

For the all-wise God cannot be deceived:  
 the word pronounced by his blessed Son, will  
 assuredly be fulfilled. “He shall send his  
 “Angels: who shall gather out of his king-  
 “dom, all things that offend, and them that  
 commit



# S E R M O N XXIII. 383

“commit iniquity; and shall cast them into  
 “the lake of fire.” Where such will be their  
 torment, that happy would it have been for  
 them, if “a millstone had been hanged about  
 “their necks, and they had been drowned in  
 “the depth of the sea; yea still far happier,  
 “if they had never been born!”

To the King Eternal---

SERMON

"The idea of this 'Wagon' will be to

...that happy would it have been for

SECRET

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# SERMON XXIV.

HEBREWS ii. 3.

*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?*

**A**T the time when this Epistle was written, the christian religion was in a very low, persecuted, condition. And the hottest fire of the persecution was blown up by that very people, in that very country, where the first gracious offers of it had been made. So you may often observe---that They who are obliged to the highest gratitude, turn the bitterest enemies against their benefactor.

The Jews that inhabited the Holy Land, were the first and most virulent adversaries to this way of true Holiness. These were commonly called Hebrews, to distinguish them from the other Jews, or Proselytes, who lived

dispersed about the several parts of the world; and were stiled Grecians. Thus you read, in the sixth chapter of the Acts, that there was a "murmuring between the Hebrews, and the Grecians"---between the Natives of Palestine, and the Stranger-Jews.

With these Hebrews, St. Paul kept a constant correspondence. And as he had himself converted many amongst them to the christian faith, who were now heavily oppressed by the prevailing majority of their infidel-brethren; and were in continual hazard of relapsing from their good principles, through the strong temptation of preserving their lives; he thence takes occasion of writing this discourse to them Both.

With the unbelieving part, he argues upon the superior excellency of the Christian, beyond that of the Mosaic institution. With the believers, he employs all the powerful persuasives, that might raise their spirits; that might support their hearts drooping under affliction, and animate them to hold fast their christian profession.

Among these arguments are, "The superlative dignity of Christ's person and office;" "The admirable things He has taught us;"



“The wonders He has done and suffered for  
“us;” and, from all this, “The certain  
“punishment of those men, who either will  
“not embrace, or can be easily drawn away  
“from, a religion, to which such signal pri-  
“vileges are annexed.”

The words I have taken for my Text, in-  
clude all the considerations abovementioned:  
And we should observe in them,

I. The Gospel, under the character of  
Salvation;----as the greatest salvation; as  
peculiarly great above all others, because it  
was obtained for us, and delivered to us, by  
the Lord.

II. How, and after what manner, men  
neglect this salvation.

III. The sure, inevitable, ruin of such,  
as do thus neglect it.

IV. The conclusion from the whole, will  
be, the unspeakable absurdity, as well, as  
disingenuity, usually discovered by sinful  
men, in this negligence.

I. The word Salvation is commonly ap-  
plied to some imminent danger, or to some  
actual calamity, under which a person or a  
people have laboured, and from which they  
are supposed to be delivered. And this sense

is fully complete, when it signifies, moreover, a continuance, an establishment, of the safety, or desirable situation, into which a person is once brought.

The title of Saviour, among the Ancients, was always esteemed the top character of honour, that could be conferred on any Being. Thus the Greeks, when they imagined that someone among their Gods, interposed for them in their battles, or in remarkable sieges, and rendered them victorious; were wont to grace Him, with the high appellation of Saviour. Hence Generals and Commanders, who delivered any Country, or rescued any Capital City, by success of arms, were dignified with the same word---a word, which has something in it so sublime, that (as the great Cicero himself confesses) the whole Latin Tongue cannot furnish one, that will adequately express the idea.

Yet, when the holy Scriptures call Almighty God "the Saviour of all men;" Or when they represent his Son, our Lord, as "bringing Salvation;" though the language is the same, the sense must rise in your mind, infinitely higher, than it can possibly be raised by any earthly character. If you have any just apprehension of spiritual things, you will



will lift your thoughts far above that low and literal acception; you will look at a blessing, far superior to any temporal deliverance, or mere terrestrial happiness.

Christ is not your Saviour, in the vulgar Heathenish and Jewish notion. He does not deliver his people by war and bloodshed; nor erect his kingdom upon the dreadful foundation of misery and slaughter. He came not to conquer for you, by an arm of flesh; nor to present you with spoils of riches, or gaudy honours, or worldly preferments.

But if you rightly understand what it is to be saved from the worst enemy, the worst evil, to which a rational soul can be subject;-- what it is to be freed from the snares of vice, from the dominion of lust, from the "bondage of corruption," that would here at present debase your nature, enslave your best powers and affections, and hereafter for ever chain you down to a painful, wretched Being; ---if you remember what it is to bind up the wounds, and cure the stings, of a guilty conscience; to turn away the wrath, and procure the pardon, of an offended Creator;---or if you reflect what it is to be governed by the wholesomest laws, to be assisted and directed

by the Eternal Spirit of truth;--if, I say, you duly consider all this, you will then perceive in what a happier, a more exalted view, Jesus is the Author of your Salvation: For He "saves you from your Sins."

He did not become your advocate, by heading armies, or conquering your fellow-creatures; but he lived to teach you the divine art of conquering yourselves; and He died, to render you capable of living for ever. To save a few by the destruction of a multitude, would have been a sorry exploit! Many a weak, many a worthless mortal, has performed the like! It is the unparalleled glory of His victory, that "by his own suffering, He has destroyed Death himself; and by his Gospel, has brought life and immortality to light."

All these circumstances cannot fail of assuring you, that this Gospel-salvation is truly great. But the Person, by whom it was spoken, by whom it was conveyed to us, will still magnify it, beyond all greatness. "It was spoken by the Lord"---by that Son of God, whom the Apostle had described in the foregoing chapter---Whom the Supreme Father "hath appointed Heir of all things;" that is, Lord and Ruler of all his works---

Whom



Whom He "hath made higher than the  
 "Angels;" giving Him a more excellent  
 name, nature, and character, than any or all  
 of them---"The brightness of his Father's  
 "glory, the express image of his person."

Lord of mercies! What an illustrious Agent  
 was here employed, to save a race of low  
 degenerate creatures! What could put the  
 Father of Heaven, upon sending such a one  
 to the sons of earth? Why, This it was---  
 To convince the whole creation, how great  
 tenderness there is in Heaven, for the honour  
 of its laws; for the welfare and recovery of  
 all its rational subjects---To shew the whole  
 universe, that though God abominates sin,  
 and is determined to punish it; yet that no-  
 thing shall finally condemn the most sinful  
 men, but their own inflexible wickedness,  
 and "neglect of divine salvation."

When you recollect this gracious errand,  
 on which your Redeemer came; you will feel  
 the comfort of those blessed words, pronounc-  
 ed from Heaven---"Unto you is born this  
 "day a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord."

II. The Second Point proposed for our  
 inquiry was, "What it is, to neglect this  
 "Salvation."

Any one, who peruses this Epistle with tolerable care, will have little doubt, that the Neglect, against which the Apostle so earnestly cautioned the Hebrews, was a neglect of the most pernicious kind, with respect both to the unreformed, and to the converted, amongst them.

In the former, the neglect was; an obstinate inattention to the truth and obligations of Christ's religion;---a blind, invincible resolution, that they would neither examine its evidence, nor receive its laws.

In the latter, the neglect was; a want of courage, to resist the pressures and temptations, which the adversaries of their faith were throwing upon them;---a criminal as well as cowardly temporizing, against their own conscience and conviction;---a giving up their Saviour and their everlasting salvation, for a few short-lived advantages of present security.

The thus deserting their Master and his Cause, St. Paul in this Epistle calls, "Sinning wilfully, after they had received the knowledge of the truth"---"Treading under foot the Son of God"---"Doing despite to the Spirit of Grace"---"Falling away"---"Drawing back unto perdition"---"For-

saking



Making the assembling of themselves together"---and the like.

But the general crime here censured, is far from being confined to those times, or to those persons. It comprehends a variety of articles, that will concern the Men, the Christians, of all times. In order to neglect and forfeit your salvation, you need not be at the bold expence, of renouncing your Baptism, or of calling Religion a cheat. You may ruin yourself as effectually, by not practising agreeably to what you believe. For it makes very little difference, whether you deny the truth of the Gospel, or destroy the power of it in your actions and conversation.

I am heartily sorry, whenever I reflect, that it is our lot to live in a christian country, in a reformed age too; wherein, though we have none of the prejudices or discouragements, with which these poor Hebrews were encompassed; yet we have as numerous vices, as frequent and flagrant neglects, as they could possibly be guilty of.

Some amongst us, are publickly writing, or openly disputing, against their Saviour, and their own salvation. Others seem perfectly indifferent, whether his religion prevails, or no religion at all. And great numbers, who  
make

make a nominal profession of it, cannot be persuaded to give it the least real encouragement; to lend the least helping hand, towards upholding its credit, or interest, in the world. Well, and what has been the consequence of all this impiety? A most obvious, a most natural one!—That, while true religion has had no regard shewn to it; false, senseless, wicked religion, has been getting ground amongst us\*; and begins to make the men, who have already lost all Conscience, tremble for fear of losing their Places, or Estates. And is not such a loss, what they justly deserve; who will not, by their example, support the worship of their Maker, nor bestow the smallest countenance upon the service of their Redeemer, for the one only day in seven, solemnly devoted to Him; no nor for so much as one hour of that day! Still less will they vouchsafe to join in commemorating their Lord's Death and Passion; except it be to qualify themselves---not for the honours, or employments, of Heaven---not for the bread of eternal life---but for some of that meat, which quickly perishes, like the people who eat it! Again;

\* This alludes to, the supposed Increase of Popery in ENGLAND, at the time this Sermon was written.



Again; many acknowledge the Gospel; nay, in their way, are strenuous and zealous for it; but never take any pains to examine what it is. As if the Bible were written to exercise mens passions, not to improve their reason; or were given to be kept locked up in your closets, instead of being diligently studied and understood.

But far most scandalous, is the neglect you daily see among those, who believe, and talk, and pretend; yes, and perform all the outward ceremonies of Christianity; but yet, in common life, act so little like Christians, indulge such humours, lusts, and vanities, as if they verily thought Christ came to save us in our sins, not from our sins; or as if "redeeming men," did not signify 'redeeming them from iniquity,' but 'translating them from the pursuit of some vices here, to the fruition of more and greater hereafter.'

Such are the ways, by which we "neglect our salvation," and "fail of the grace of God." How severe a sentence we must expect for so doing, let us in the next place impartially consider,

III. To them who believe the holy scriptures, the Apostle's argument is most plain and

and undeniable. "He that despised Moses  
his law, died without mercy." So, again ;  
"Every transgression and disobedience" (even  
of that Mosaic religion) "received a just re-  
compence of reward." Now, says St. Paul,  
"As Christ is superior to Moses ; the Son of  
God, to a mere Servant in God's house ; so  
much is his law and his salvation greater,  
higher, nobler. Consequently the penalty  
for the contempt of it, is the more certain,  
and will be the more dreadful."

Since the method of our salvation proposed  
in the Gospel, is thus transcendently wise and  
excellent ; it must, for that reason, be the last,  
which God will ever publish, or offer to man-  
kind. The pardon of sin, and the promise of  
eternal life, are the utmost that God himself,  
with all his compassion, or bounty, can be-  
stow upon us. The virtues required to qua-  
lify us for the heavenly state, are, by their  
own nature, so adapted to that glorious end ;  
so full of contentment and delight, even in  
their present exercise ;---that no other could  
possibly have answered the design of the su-  
preme Lawgiver. Above all, the life death  
and example of our blessed Master, are such  
generous incitements to a conscientious prac-

tise



tise of every duty. He has enjoined us; that after this, divine Goodness itself can find nothing more to do with man, but to redeem the faithful, and to vindicate the honour of its commands upon the incorrigibly sinful.

And how can such offenders hope to escape? We are but one small world, among thousands, among numberless other worlds, of intelligent creatures. These are all subject to the laws of reason and virtue, according to their several natures, as well as ourselves. They are witnesses and spectators of God's proceedings with the moral creation. They are admonished, warned, instructed, by his mercies, and his judgments. By seeing his rewards of obedience, they rejoice, and are encouraged in obedience. By beholding his justice executed upon the rebellious, they are taught to fear ingenuously, to reverence his wisdom and power.

Should the universal Governor therefore be remiss, or regardless of punishment; He would let fall the dignity, and even the mercy, of his divine government. Such a "licence to sin," would relax the care, and quench the virtue, of the whole rational world; would spread vice and confusion throughout the kingdom of God.

When

When our behaviour, then, has been thus kindly and providentially put upon its trial, there can be no new trial, without punishment: because there are no other morals, no other rules of conduct, proper for men to be tried by. When you have defeated the last and best means, you may still hope if you please, or amuse yourself; but God you can not possibly mock.

IV. I will detain you no longer, than while I make a short general remark, upon the inexcusable imprudence, the disingenuity, usually discovered by the men (especially by the men of our own age and nation) who thus neglect their grand, their final, interest.

When we look back upon the case of the primitive Hebrew Christians; what a difficult lesson of patience they had to learn; what hardships they underwent, in struggling through a life of persecuted piety; I dare say we all possess so much humanity, as to commiserate, and sympathize with them. If we suppose ourselves to have lived in their time, and to have been in their place; we cannot easily pronounce, what we should have done, or how we should have endured the trial. Such of them as fell from the faith, we could



could not but pity: such as stood firm in it, we could not but admire.

What then shall we be able to plead, in our own present case? What apology can Wit, or Charity herself, invent for us? We are likely to lose, neither life, nor lands, nor houses, nor brethren, nor children, in the cause of Christ, or for the Gospel of our salvation. What therefore is the bait, what can be the charm, that bewitches us to neglect and cast away this "pearl of inestimable price?" Why, it is the gratification of certain "worldly, carnal lusts," that are common to us with the brutes; that will scarcely pay us for the pain, with which their pleasure is imbittered. Brutes eat and drink, and so do we: only they generally do it, to a measure of natural sufficiency: but we, very often, till nature is surfeited, till she sickens with enjoyment.

I am sure you cannot name a single vice, for which you pawn your future salvation; but what is a present plague, to yourselves, as well as to all about you. Some of them waste your bodies: others ruin your reputation. Some end in your own poverty, or entail it upon your families; or drag your  
 best,

best, your dearest friends, into a partnership of your misery and want. All, without exception, deprave your minds; disgrace you as men, and rational creatures.

For these unworthy objects, our Libertines abandon the virtues; to cultivate which, Providence has blest them with a state of freedom and of peace; which would allow them every real pleasure they can desire, in this world; and would entitle them to joys, that will be far more refined, as well as more durable, in the next.

To God, only wise--

SERMON



## S E R M O N XXV.

PROVERBS iv. 26.

*Ponder the path of thy feet; and let all thy ways be established.*

**T**HE universe, whereof Almighty God is the author, as well as the supreme governor, is very properly divided, by philosophical men, into the natural world, and the moral one.

The natural world either consists of Material Bodies, that are impressed with certain powers of motion, and other qualities; but have no knowledge, no consciousness, respecting these qualities, nor any ability to direct or alter their motion: Or else it consists of mere Animals, endued with sense, and certain appetites; which they uniformly follow, from an impulse, commonly called instinct.

Thus the sun, moon, and all the heavenly bodies, go their stated rounds ; perform their wonderful periods ; keep their constant orbits ; never starting or deviating from their appointed lines : yet know not in the least, what they are doing ; I mean, how, or by whom, they are acted. The Royal Psalmist therefore must be understood to speak figuratively, when he says, that “ they tell or “ declare the glory of God.”

The brute creatures indeed, discover something like voluntary action ; but are void of all reflection upon what passes within them. They march straight forward : look very little, if at all, either backwards or before them : think about no consequences, no moral difference of action : have no other view, than gratifying the present inclination, whereby to preserve present life ; and entertain no fear or idea concerning futurity. From all which it clearly follows, that they are not properly accountable for any thing they do.

Man is a creature, formed in quite another, in a superior, mold. His mind is furnished, not only with sensation, or mere perception, or a bare capacity of acting ; but



but with a power of reflecting upon his actions ; of seeing and comparing their natures, qualities, and various circumstances ; of looking into their natural and moral fitness, or unfitness ; of foreseeing the several events, even the distant consequences, which they will severally produce, to himself or his fellows.

Moreover ; as this same power enables him to observe the fixed relations of things, the necessary connection of causes and effects ; he thence attains (or may and should attain) the knowledge of a First Cause, or Creator ; from whom both he, and all the objects he beholds around him, derived their Being.

Thus he concludes, that he is a subject, under the universal Governor ; supremely wise, good, just, and powerful. He discerns and feels, that he is a member of the moral world ; that he is a creature, obliged, by his very frame and constitution, to certain duties, to certain rules of conduct, regarding his Creator, his fellow-creatures, and himself.

Lastly ; he finds from perpetual experience, that such rules and duties, cannot even

be discovered or understood, much less can they be obeyed, be conscientiously practised, without due attention and consideration of mind.

This attention Solomon here sets forth, under an easy metaphor. He calls it, "pondering the path of our feet;" or seriously examining, what steps we are to take; what is the nature of our actions, as men; what are the laws, by which we should govern them.

This caution the wise man exhorts us to use, for the sake of the desirable, salutary effect, which it will have upon us---"Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established."

The marginal reading is better expressed, and more agreeably to the intention of the Royal Teacher---"so all thy ways shall be ordered aright." That is, 'If you make a prudent choice of the rule you are to walk by, and weigh it well;---if you reflect as you ought, upon the station you are placed in, upon the duties belonging to that station;---then your principles will be solid, steady, secure; and your conduct



conduct will of course be rational, consistent, discreet, and finally happy.

The words of the Text, you see, point out to us these Three several truths.

I. That there is an essential difference in human actions---a sacred law, distinguishing good from evil, and of the utmost importance to be rightly understood by us.

II. That the knowledge of this law, with a firm conviction of its obligation, must be our own work, our own free choice---must result from our own free inquiry and meditation: "Ponder the path of thy feet."

III. That after we have acquired a just conception of this rule; yet the habitual observance of it, and the benefits consequent upon such an observance, cannot possibly be obtained, without frequently reviewing our behaviour; without often comparing it with the standard, by which it ought to be regulated. Or, as Solomon speaks in the text; "unless our ways be duly pondered, they can never be established, nor ordered aright."

I. First, then: the Text, I say, implies and supposes a general maxim; namely, that there is an invariable moral difference in

“ human actions ; an indispensable rule of  
 “ right ; which we are infinitely concerned  
 “ to learn and understand.”

However undeniably evident this maxim may appear, from the very nature of man, as a reasonable, social creature ; yet all open, profane wickedness, all wilful indulgence of vice or debauchery, is an indirect declaration, that the quite contrary supposition is true. For though there are but few people so abandoned, as explicitly to disown all distinction between good and evil, in words ; yet every sinful man's practise, demonstrates his disregard of that distinction ; and amounts to just the same, as if he absolutely disclaimed the distinction itself.

But you have heard, I imagine, of some creatures ; whose evil habits have so totally perverted them, as to make them venture, in their own defence, upon professedly denying the stated laws, that should influence and protect the life of man ;—upon expressly affirming, that ‘ The world has all along been grievously deluded ;’ that ‘ Virtue and Vice are nothing more than Names, forged and devised by Some, in order to gain an ascendancy over Others ;’ in order

‘ to



\*to get the Vulgar under their direction,  
 \*for political ends, or the purposes of  
 \*priestcraft.

It would everlastingly silence these wretched disputants, if we could only persuade them to look a little before them, and see whither such an opinion will lead them; or to look once behind them, and behold what it is that must overtake them.

These people, surely, possess some share of natural reason, as well as other men. They can perceive what pleasure and pain are. They know the comforts, arising from society. They love rights and property, peace trade and plenty, in common with the rest of their brethren. But what sad havock do they make of all these social blessings, by the wrong-headed, destructive notion, they would advance! What can be the use of reason, or for what conceivable end could it be given us, but to inform us concerning the difference of things, and the tendency of our actions; to order our conversation, by the maxims of duty and discretion?

If some conduct be not in itself laudable and amiable, nor the opposite conduct disgraceful and criminal; the brute-faculties

would have served us perfectly well :----  
rational, intellectual endowments, were bestowed upon us to a vain purpose !

If there be not a native beauty and excellence, an inherent turpitude and deformity, in mens doings ; sense, or mere instinct, would have been far more proper for carrying on our present life, than wisdom and understanding.

Again ; without supposing some universal Rule of right, some Law of public utility ; what are kingdoms, governments, and families ? What are communities, commerce, and friendships ; the welfare of towns, the tranquillity of neighbourhoods ? Why, they are all, it seems, mere cant words of Churchmen, or Statesmen ; mere dreams, and empty sounds ! Nothing at all in the things themselves ; no real duties, no mutual ties, no obligations, belonging to them !

Once more ; if malice fraud and violence, justice truth and benevolence, have all one common origin, be all of the same indifferant nature ; men will doubtless, at length, find out that they are so. And the inference from this notable discovery will

be,



be, that ' Happy would it have been for  
 ' the world, if God had never given us un-  
 ' derstanding enough to deceive and outwit,  
 ' to rob and oppress, one another ! It was  
 ' cruel in our Maker, to put a set of crea-  
 ' tures, formed with so much cunning, and  
 ' so little principle, into society together !  
 ' It would have been a mercy in Providence,  
 ' to have taught us no more than the beasts  
 ' of the field ; to have made us no wiser,  
 ' than the fowls of heaven.'

But finally ; beside the foregoing manifest,  
 glaring absurdities, in denying the virtue  
 and guilt, the morality and immorality, of  
 human actions ; there is also the grossest  
 hypocrisy, the most arrant impudence and  
 inconsistency, chargeable upon this libertine  
 sect of philosophers.

For these same patrons of freedom, who  
 would throw down all fences, who would  
 level all distinction between right and wrong,  
 always take special care to keep a Reserve  
 for themselves. When their own lusts are  
 to be fulfilled, their own barbarities exer-  
 cised, or their own humours gratified, at  
 the expence of their neighbour's happiness,  
 or enjoyments ; ----all may pass smooth and  
 easy

easy with them. But only turn the tables upon them: only let insults, injuries, and oppression, once be laid upon their own backs; and who, sooner than they, will cry aloud for prisons; for justice and judgment? Now they can see and feel and confess, what truth and right are; can demand the rods, the axes, and the gallows, for all that "break laws, or commit iniquity."

No marvel therefore, that you find the holy Scriptures, denouncing the most solemn curse upon the men, who are led by this illiberal, licentious spirit; as the highest affronters of their God, and offenders against their own human nature! "Wo unto them, that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

II. The Second Thing, which the Text directs us to remark, is; that "Our knowledge of this Rule, with a due sense and apprehension of this sacred Law, must be our own work, our own free choice." Or, in other words; "It must be acquired, by our own diligent careful study." "Ponder the path of thy feet."

For



For though all, that can justly be called Religion, is intelligible to all men, and lies within the reach of every capacity ; (or how else could the Salvation of all men depend upon it) though this, I say, is undoubtedly certain ; yet the most obvious truths may be shamefully forgotten ; great errors and impositions may be incurred, even in the plainest things. Nay, the plainer, the more important, such matters are, the worse, very often, are the corruptions, introduced into them.

Thus, in the present case. The genuine rule of faith and morals, is indeed abundantly evident. Yet still, it must be remembered, pondered, and attended to : or we shall never be established in it. We shall never be satisfied, or settled, in our principles. But shall be liable to one of these two epidemical evils--either to mislead ourselves, or to be deluded and abused by other people.

They who think upon God, upon his divine Word and Will, without a frank, impartial mind, and a heart free from narrow prejudices, necessarily form to themselves a strait-laced, troublesome scheme of piety,

piety. By having a false idea of their Rule, they make it a burden and a vexation to them. They act with diffidence and slavish fear. They place conscience in things of little concern. They are often as pensive, as anxious, about trifles and externals; as if they were the "weightiest matters of the law." This wrong turn of sentiment, frequently begets an immoderate, fiery zeal; that is no less offensive to others, than it is plagueful to the man who possesses it.

Such is enthusiastic Bigotry! which has so often usurped the hallowed name of Religion! A principle, originally derived from ignorance and error; nourished by fancy, and a warm imagination; brought to a dreadful maturity, by strong, ill-governed, passions; and sometimes terminating in as much confusion to the cause of the Gospel, as Infidelity, or Atheism itself, could possibly produce.

But further; if we do not exercise our reason, if we do not deliberately and judiciously choose our religious opinions; we shall expose ourselves to the other sad instance of danger,—that of being seduced, and made a prey, by those about us. For



so it almost always happens,--that they, who employ no pains or conscience in choosing religion for themselves, have it provided, and drest up for them, by other men: the consequence of which, is terrible indeed! Since the people, who intend to bind their own creed upon their neighbours hearts, generally take care first, to tie their hands, and to blind their eyes: and then every step they set without their leaders, is at their own peril. Thus it has repeatedly come to pass, for want of a little tolerable consideration, and common reflection; such reflection, as every man may easily attain; that the true religion, like its blessed Author, has first been scandalized, and afterwards crucified between two thieves. Priestcraft, on the one side, has made it odious; while superstition, on the other, has rendered it ridiculous.

But here, I beg you will remember; that this effect has arisen, as well from the folly and ill disposition of those who take this offence, as from the weakness and wickedness of those who gave it. For let there be a thousand errors in the world, or ten thousand villainies; still, I hope, there is  
such

such a thing left, as plain truth and honesty. Each of you has his duties, obligations, and clear rules, to walk by ; though ever so many men, though ever so many ages of men, have endeavoured to darken, or to corrupt them. And if you retain the least notion, the least ambition, of acting up to your rank and character, as a man ; you will never shake off the sacred bonds of humanity, because Enthusiasts have been mad, or Priests have been knaves.

“ Ponder therefore these safe and pleasant “ paths”----view these sober wholesome principles”----of “ loving God, and your “ neighbour ;” of “ temperance, justice, “ righteousness, mercy, and charity.” They have nothing in them, severe, intricate, mysterious, or morose. They were never invented by Politicians, nor coined by Priests. They fear no examination, but lie open to your own common sense, and daily experience. They are recommended to you, by no human traffickers in divinity ; but by Christ himself, by God, and Nature.

Such are the virtues, concerning which God has promised ; that, “ If you will  
“ embrace



“embrace them, if you will think upon  
 “them, and faithfully practise them; they  
 “will establish your ways---will give you  
 “all the comfort you can enjoy in the pre-  
 “sent life; and will lay up for you a good  
 “foundation against the time to come, that  
 “ye may lay hold on life eternal.”

To Him only wise---

CONFIDENTIAL - SECURITY INFORMATION

... ..

1932-1933

3. The Commission has also received information from the Government of the Republic of the Philippines that the Government has been providing military assistance to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the form of arms, ammunition, and other military equipment. This assistance has been provided to the AFP in the form of grants and loans, and has been used by the AFP in its operations against the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

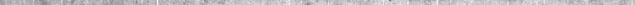
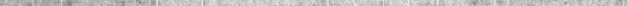
1944

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED



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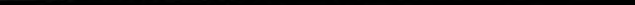


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# S E R M O N XXVI

PROVERBS iv. 26.

*Ponder the path of thy feet; \* and let all thy ways be established.*

**I**N a previous discourse upon these words, I purposed examining the great duty of religious consideration; and have remarked to you,

I. An evident truth here supposed, as a ground of this consideration: namely, that "There is an essential difference in human actions, both as to their moral qualities, and their natural consequences;----that there is a certain rule, an eternal law, which distinguishes good from evil; and the observance of which, most intimately concerns us all." This I have endeavoured to prove, as well from the reason of the

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thing

Or, so all thy ways *shall* be ordered aright. As it is better rendered in the margin.

thing itself, as from the flagrant absurdities of the contrary opinion.

II. I informed you, that "A right sense, or knowledge, of this rule, cannot possibly be attained by any other means, than by our own free choice,—by our own voluntary, careful inquiry."

III. The remaining part of my design is, to treat this duty, as it immediately respects the practical life. Accordingly I shall shew you, that "However clearly we may understand this rule, yet we cannot reduce it to practise, nor bring it to a virtuous and happy effect, without frequently revising our conduct; and comparing our actions with the principles, by which they should be governed." Or, in the stile of the Text, "Our ways must be duly pondered, before they can be established and ordered aright."

To evince this grand point, let us divide man's whole life, into the only three articles, of which it consists. Either, 1, his past actions. Or, 2, his present ones. Or, 3, his future behaviour.

I First then, I say; that whoever would be a valuable or an amiable man, must have a continual regard to the condition and transactions of his former life.



If you look into human nature, under its present circumstances; you will see infinite occasion, not only for the men of more defective characters, but even for those of better conscience, to cast an eye backward, and to survey what they have been doing. The very best amongst us all, have performed the work of our lives so imperfectly; have left so many blanks, to fill up; so many flaws, to amend; nay, doubtless, so many sins to answer for; that we shall act but a modest part, by making the words of the pious Psalmist, our own---“Who can tell, how oft he offendeth!” And if we expect to arrive at any improvement, or perfection; we must, beside copying his words, follow his example too----“I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.” That is, I corrected my errors, by timely recollecting, of what kind they were, and in what points they lay.

Most things, when past, are extremely liable to be forgotten; to be as little considered, as if they had vanished out of Being. But sinful actions must not be so treated. Unless you often call them before you, and, by reviewing the guilt and evil of them, contract

a commendable prejudice against them; they will leave a taint upon your mind; and their relish will grow in you, will become agreeable to you.

Without repentance for what is past, all your good dispositions will be in imminent danger of decaying and perishing, for the time to come. Now repentance is evermore the result of thought, of reflection: and so the holy scriptures always represent it.

When the prophet Ezekiel was commanded to warn the Israelites of the peril they were in, through their past ill behaviour; God did it, with this prospect----“It may be, “they will consider,” and repent. And the prophet Jeremiah gives this reason, why that nation so obstinately persisted in their disobedience: “I hearkened and heard,” says God; that is, I desired, I patiently waited for, their conversion; “but they spake “not aright: no man repented him of his “wickedness, saying, what have I done!”

Many Christians, nay many christian Writers, and even christian Teachers, have discovered great weakness, or something much worse; by ascribing all repentance to a mysterious operation of the Divine Spirit!

As



As if they verily thought, that it is no duty at all of man, because totally beyond the reach of man, and altogether the act of God. And then, indeed, it may be done at any time whatever. Then, a drooping old-age, after a life of debauched youth; or a death-bed sickness, with a defiled conscience;----may afford sufficient space to complete the good work, and thoroughly purify the soul of the offender. For, if God only speaks the word, the thing is effected, the man is converted. But the Scriptures teach you far otherwise; far more agreeably to reason, nature, and experience. Nay, even some learned Heathen Moralists, come much nearer to the sense of the Prophet's doctrine, than such deluded Christians!

Pythagoras, in the famous precepts called the Golden Verses, tells his disciples; that  
 "It would mightily conduce towards leading  
 "them into the paths of religious virtue;  
 "if they would examine themselves every  
 "night before they went to sleep, What  
 "good they had done, what duty they had  
 "omitted."

Seneca has recorded, in terms of high respect, a philosopher named Sextius, who al-

ways did the same ; whose last words, at the conclusion of every day, were such as these--

“ How have I been employed to day ? Am

“ I as free from guilt, am I a better, or am I

“ not a worse man, than I was yesterday ?”

And (though I cannot at present recollect his name) I have read of some great Master ; who, by his own example, encouraged his scholars to keep a book, containing daily notes of their neglects and transgressions.

I am entirely sensible, what reception such advice would meet with at this time of day, among our modern, modish, Christians---and yet we must not be so uncomplaisant, as to rank them below the unenlightened Heathens. Let me, however, tell them freely ; that though I would by no means, against their Will, confine them to a book ; I could heartily wish they would make a book of their own memories, and register a few of their conversations and transactions there ! It would be unspeakably advantageous to them ; by rendering them not a bit less Gentlemen, and much better Christians !

Certainly, from not following some method like this ; people in general, are just as well qualified to give an account of life, as a man  
that



that rides post through a country, is fit to write a natural history of it.

Nor would I exactly prescribe, how often you should look over these memorandums: but I may very safely assert, that the oftener you did so, the greater benefit you would receive. A person's spiritual concerns, and the affairs of his conscience, pretty nearly resemble those of his trade, or his estate.

The longer he lets them run, without searching into them; the more confused, and intricate they will become: till at last, it may be almost impossible to set them right. You can never keep your heart so pure, or so easy; as when you are frequently reckoning with it, and seeing how the account stands.

Thus much then, concerning our past behaviour. Let us now,

2. Try the case, as it regards a man's present actions, or designs.--- Solomon has a sage lecture of advice, a good deal similar to this in the Text: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." And the wise Son of Sirach.: "Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end: and thou shalt never do amiss."---"Whatsoever thy hand

“findeth to do:” not any action, taken up at random; but such a conduct, as you have chosen upon deliberate and mature consideration. “Do it with thy might:” not in a heat, or in a hurry; but with proper diligence, without needless delay. And then, when you have thus duly weighed the nature, end, and utility, of the things you undertake; “thou shalt never do amiss:” not that you shall never commit any one single mistake, or indiscretion, throughout life; but that you shall fall into the fewest errors, which this frail Being of ours will allow.

St. Paul, in his first Epistle, gives the Corinthians, and all other Christians, a lesson of exhortation, that has exactly the same import: “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do; do all to the glory of God.”---It would betray gross ignorance, and want of judgment, to interpret such an expression as this, into a superstitious anxiety, a burthensome preciseness, in every trifling occurrence. The Apostle’s words include such actions only, whereby some good or evil may be done, to ourselves, and the world about us. In cases directly moral, the glory of God, or the interest of his



his spiritual kingdom, the credit and influence of his Gospel among mankind, is immediately concerned. And even in the common or more indifferent actions of life, virtue and vice are not wholly unconcerned. Some general view, some remote consideration of them, ought to be had, in every thing we do.

Our business, our daily employments, may launch out into immoderate care; into covetousness; into fraud, and injustice; unless reason, and a good conscience, keep them within the limits of real industry, honesty, benevolence, and charity. Our sports, recreations, and diversions, may terminate in folly, in a waste of precious time; unless a prudent caution interposes, and directs them to their proper end---to the promoting the health and vigour of the body, without spoiling the temper or gravity of the mind.

Finally; every pleasure a man can pursue, perpetually calls upon him to beware, that religion and virtue be no sufferers by it. Man was created to go through a set of actions, that imply the obligation of duty: various offices, connections, and relations, conspire to form the whole of his life, Himself, his children, his friends, his neighbours, his country; the high

high and low; the rich and poor---all put in their claim to some service from his good conduct. While at the same time objects, under a multitude of shapes, are soliciting him to walk in quite different paths; and, by a thousand baits, are luring his mind from its proper work, to that which is unprofitable and vain.

All this task therefore can scarce possibly be performed, nor all these enticements be avoided or withstood; but by that careful consideration, about which I am speaking; ---that habitual regard to the nature, circumstances, and tendency of our actions, which is our best, our only security, against present evil.

3. This attention to ourselves, and to the rule of our duty, will appear equally necessary, if we look into the last class of human actions; namely, a man's future behaviour; as that which concludes, which determines, his character, for good, or for evil.

When the holy Scriptures warn us, to be "sober and vigilant;" to "watch and pray," "that we enter not into temptation;"---when our blessed Lord so earnestly exhorts his disciples, to "take heed that their hearts

" be



“be not overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, and the cares of this world;”---in these, I say, and all the like admonitions, a most providential regard is shewn, to the temper of our minds, and to the state of our lives.

If you either survey your own spirits, or judge from what generally passes in the world around you; you will manifestly see, that, without continual care and thought, the wisest man breathing, cannot certainly pronounce to-day, what he shall be to-morrow.

It may seem strange at first hearing, but experience demonstrates, that “a right course of action, does not always follow a right judgment in the understanding.” Truth is often as clear as the light: but bare conviction, mere faith or belief, even of the clearest and most interesting truths, may often be found without a suitable practice; though they are, indeed, the best means towards it, the best preparatives for it,

“To do the thing, you cannot inwardly approve; and to lead the life, in many particulars, which your own conscience tells you is wrong;”---is the reproach, we are daily casting upon each other. It is an infinite pity, matters should be so! But our present

present business is, to inquire why they are so; ' what is still requisite for producing real, ' actual virtue, where there is already a good ' understanding.' In one plain word then--- The sole thing requisite, is this frequent Consideration; this repeated Reflection upon the indispensable necessity of conforming to the principles we believe and understand. Without which reflection, the bare sight, the bare idea of them, will glide into the mind, and glide out of it again, like an empty vision, or a dream!

St. Paul therefore consulted human nature perfectly well, when he bids the Hebrews, " give earnest heed to the things which they " had heard; lest at any time they should let " them slip." And St. Peter, notwithstanding he wrote to men that were thoroughly acquainted with their duty; yet, says he, " I will not be negligent to put you always " in remembrance of these things, though " ye know them."

Reason, as well as the Word of God, will everlastingly pass sentence, for every virtue, and against every vice. But it is the attention we pay to that Reason, it is our habitual veneration for that divine Word, which alone  
can



can rouse our hearts to action, give a check to the violence of our passions, and set us above the power of strong temptations, of fashionable bad examples. So says the philosopher Seneca, just now mentioned: "It requires greater labour to maintain good principles, than to form them at first. And it is by no means so difficult, to attain knowledge, as to put our knowledge into practise. There must therefore," adds that grave Moralist, "be a continual application of thought to what you have learnt, and resolved upon. For this, and this only, can turn that into an habit of the Will, which would otherwise be a mere sentiment or notion of the Understanding."

The result of what has passed upon the whole subject, would be extremely useful, if properly regarded, to all who profess and call themselves Christians.

Its benefits would be felt, even by the most upright persons. It would awaken them, to higher degrees of industry and watchfulness; prevent their being at a stand, in their endeavours; make them press on, toward the mark of their high calling; and cause them not only to continue, but to grow, in grace.

Let

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Let no idle, profligate creature, think it a burden, or a slavery, to "consider his condition and his actions; to recollect and rectify the errors of his life." Consideration is your natural exercise, as a rational Being. It is what you were formed for, and fitted for. It is your most important employment: and a little serious pains will occasion it to become your sublimest pleasure.

At the beginning, indeed, it may be no pleasing sight, to behold your own deformity; and there can be but little satisfaction, in dwelling upon your own misconduct. So that you may possibly cry out to your repenting, guilty, thoughts, as the evil Spirits formerly did to our blessed Saviour; "Why are ye come to torment me, before the time." Yet, if you will but have patience; if you will but stand the operation once and again; you will find the pain abate every day. Every fresh trial will lighten your work: and, next to the joy of never running into foolish errors at all; the most generous, the most exalted comfort upon earth, is the seeing, and the correcting them!

In all worldly engagements, in the whole business of common life, no character is esteemed



esteemed so low, or so mean, as that of an unthinking man. And why may it not, much more justly, be thus esteemed, in the business of the moral life? Since all our worldly characters and concerns, are of very small importance, of very short duration. Whereas our moral actions and characters, with their various good or evil consequences, will follow us far beyond the Grave; will be to us an eternal source, of happiness or misery, of glory or disgrace!

Let me conclude, by addressing myself, and applying the wise man's advice, to all young persons. You are now entering upon your journey through this transitory life. And your future progress will greatly depend on the track, in which you set out. Be particularly cautious of the first steps you take. For, when you have once chosen a false road; Youth and inexperience will be too apt to hurry you forward in it. And then, the faster you go, the sooner will you arrive at destruction----the further and the more fatally will you stray from the true road, that leads to everlasting life. "Ponder therefore the path of your feet; that so all your ways may be ordered aright."

To the King Eternal---

# THE KING OF THE KINGS

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 leads to everlasting life. "Remember therefore,  
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 ways may be ordered aright, as you stand  
 before the King Eternal."



# SERMON XXVII.

JOB vii. 20.

*I have sinned: what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men.*

**WHILE** Job lay under the chastising hand of God, there was a long conference between him and his friends, about the cause, that occasioned his calamities; or how to account for the justice of the Sovereign Providence, which inflicted them.

Job's friends, from the narrow, imperfect notions, they entertained concerning the divine government, inferred (and strongly insisted upon it) that he must needs have committed some atrocious crimes:---Supposing it utterly inconsistent with God's attributes, as an all-wise, righteous Being, to afflict a tolerably innocent person, with any remarkable degree even of temporal evil.

But the good man, conscious of his own integrity, as to any scandalous, or frequent enormities; vindicates himself, and confutes their arguments. However, in his replies to the charge brought against him, Job does by no means claim an absolute, a faultless, purity. A sinner, (as all men more or less are) he acknowledged himself to be. Some single, particular deviations from the divine law, he cannot but be imagined to have fallen into. And, even in that light, he humbly considered himself, as obnoxious to the displeasure of the great Creator. He thought, that not all his severest repentance could ever make a full, an adequate recompence, for any one sin against the Infinite Majesty of Heaven!

Transgression against a neighbour, or against any human authority merely as such, may admit complete satisfaction: because here, we have to deal with those that are our Equals, in nature, and in the general circumstances of life. But with respect to God, the Supreme Lawgiver; Job rightly states the question: "I have sinned: what shall I do unto Thee, "O thou Preserver"---it should rather be translated, "O thou Creator, of mankind"---or, as the Septuagint renders it, "O  
"thou



“thou that knowest the hearts of men?”

The words, you see, are spoken by way of comparison. They mean to express, “How peculiarly criminal, how exceedingly dangerous, is all wickedness, considered as a breach of the divine laws, beyond what it is, as committed against the laws of man, or those of any other legislature you can conceive.”

Old Eli speaks the very same sentiment, when he thus reproves his sons for their lewdness and impiety: “If one man sin against another, the Judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intertreat for him?”

In this sense therefore I understand the Text. And, the better to justify the doctrine it contains, I will,

I. Inquire into the nature of vicious actions in general, and shew you wherein their guilt or evil consists.

II. I shall thence deduce the truth of this particular proposition. And,

III, Conclude with one or two reflections, that, I hope, may be useful to your practical christian life.

I. When God created the world, He

endued the fundry creatures which He put into it, with such powers and properties, as were suited to the constitution of each; such as might fit them for acting, or being acted upon, agreeably to the wise intent and scheme of their existence.

These properties or qualities thus implanted in creatures, and the constant operation of them, we call their laws, and their observing or following the laws of their nature. So the heavenly bodies keep their regular motions, aspects, and periods; according to the distances appointed them, to the forces and directions impress upon them. So vegetables and animals grow; the sea ebbs and flows; every thing, in short, not only upon earth, but throughout the material world, goes forward in the order, and pursuant to the purposes, designed by the grand Workmaster.

If any power should abolish these essential qualities, or obstruct their operation; we should rightly say, that "the nature of such things was altered, suspended, or destroyed."

The case is exactly similar, in the moral world. When God gave us Being, and placed us upon this Globe; He breathed into us living souls, with faculties of understanding, reasoning,



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reasoning, reflecting, choosing; that we might be qualified to live like rational, social creatures; under a sense of Him, our Maker and Disposer; for his glory, our own personal happiness, and the general welfare of communities; that, moreover, by thus faithfully discharging our several services, we might obtain his further favour, in a future superior state.

Our internal feeling, or consciousness, of these faculties, of the beneficial ends for which they were bestowed on us, demonstrates our obligation, or the law we are under, to pursue and fulfil those ends. And this I look upon, to be the proper idea of moral, as well as religious duty.

What then is Sin, or Vice? It is the transgression of these rules, these boundaries of action, prescribed by Reason and Providence. It is the contradiction, the subversion, of all the wise methods proposed for our good, by the bountiful Author of nature, and of the creation.

And though injustice and oppression have an immediate relation to society, or are immediately destructive of it; --- though sensuality and debauchery work their first mischief

upon a man's self, upon his health, his morals, his reputation, his worldly affairs; --- though, I say, these crimes are directly levelled against your neighbour and yourselves; yet the guilt and evil of them, do by no means terminate here. Oh no! They reach with still greater malignity, up to Heaven itself. They are an insult upon His unbounded authority, upon His sacred ordinances, who is the God of the universe, the Original of all rectitude, the Fountain of all perfection and happiness.

II. Which naturally leads our attention to the capital doctrine, pointed out by the Text --- namely, "How heinous in themselves, how dreadful in their consequences, are all wicked actions, considered as breaches of the divine commands; beyond what they are, as committed against a mere human government, or any other power whatsoever."

Now, in general, this is exceedingly apparent, from the contents of the foregoing head. The transcendent, inexpressible excellency, which raises the divine nature above that of man, and of every other Being, most strongly demonstrates it. But I beg you will suffer me to shew it distinctly, in the several particulars of the comparison.

1, then,



r, then. "Let a sinful man turn his thoughts upon the Person whom he offends by every immoral action."

If you sin against Yourself, and suffer the painful effects of immoderate intemperance; though, when you come to reflect on your folly, you cannot forbear condemning yourself;---yet the love of vicious pleasures, and new temptations to repeat them, will help you to forget your pain, or inure you to bear it.

Or if you trespass against your Neighbour; against your parent, your prince, your country; in all such instances, you offend against those, who belong to the same common species, to the same common rank of Being, with yourself. The jurisdiction they exercise over you, is only a delegated one. They are nothing more than men; and surpass you in merely external, transitory circumstances. But what will you say, to the Creator of men? There, the distance between you, is infinite! There, the authority you affront, is original, eternal, and unlimited!

Moreover; the decrees, or injunctions, of some earthly governors, are chargeable with great defects; their Wills and tempers are arbitrary, fickle, fantastical. So that a man

may be much more unhappy than culpable, in disobeying them. And what he suffers for such disobedience, may demand a considerable degree of pity, from every tender breast. Whereas the Heavenly Governor is above all exception. His precepts are the laws of nature, are modelled by the amiable, everlasting standard, of righteousness and equity. It may therefore be highly criminal, to sin against man. But it is the highest possible ingratitude, to sin against the Author of your existence, of all the blessings you have, or hope for, or can ever enjoy!

2. Let me give you a further proof, "How inexcusable are all deliberate and repeated violations of God's holy laws." For it is concerning such habitual wickedness, that I would be understood principally to speak, throughout the present discourse.

The world we live in, is a confused, an intricate, scene of things; abounding with various, promiscuous turns, of good and evil. So that ill fortune, or ill treatment, may often urge us to clash with each other; may often make us less nicely careful, than we ought to be, about the exact limits of right and wrong. Add to this, that the rules  
and



and orders of many societies, are ambiguous, or obscure; afford different handles; will admit different interpretations: or, perhaps, bear hard upon particular persons:---Whence room is left for pleas and sophistries without number, to elude the penalties incurred by the offender. Whereas whatever is a dictate of Conscience, or the voice of God within you, carries such reasons to recommend, such powerful inducements to enforce it, as cut off all pretensions to any apology. The lessons of Duty to your Maker, are written in characters so legible, that "He who runs, may read them." The vices which endanger your salvation, are like open rocks in the sea. Nothing but your own wilful blindness, can possibly prevent your seeing and shunning them.

3dly. If a presumptuous sinner against the Lord and Father of mankind, be thus debarred from all excuse; "What shall he do, in point of atonement? By what method shall he reconcile this blessed and only Potentate?"

When an injury is done to our fellow-creature, it may indeed be very grievous, and highly provoking. Yet how many ways are there,

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there, to salve the matter, to make all whole again! A neighbour may step in, and restore the peace. A friend may interpose, and heal the wound with a few salutary words. Or, if these should fail, interest and money have a virtue, that can charm the fiercest resentment, can cool the hottest blood.

But here it is, that Job's question takes full place; and throws us into inextricable difficulties! What will the transgressor offer, to satisfy the Maker of Souls? Or what amends can be proposed, to Sovereign Eminence and Greatness? All that the offender has, all that the whole world contains, is God's already: and you can present Him with nothing, which was not his own before! The only thing that wears the least face of satisfaction, is repentance. And Reason does indeed assure us, that it must be good to repent; that unfeigned contrition, attended with real amendment of life, will move compassion in a wise, benevolent, Governor.

Yet even repentance itself, strictly speaking, is no absolute expiation, for trespasses committed. It is only doing that very duty in future time, which you ought always and uniformly to have done. It cannot revoke,

there

cannot



cannot annihilate, what is actually past. The old debt stands, just as before ; and can never possibly be cancelled, without a special act of free grace, of divine mercy.

4. Let me close this comparison, by asking every unreclaimed sinner ; “ What he will do “ to his Maker, respecting either the greatness of the punishment which awaits his “ crimes, or the certainty of that punishment.”

Whenever laws, in any community, are broken ; the necessity of all government demands, that a suitable penalty be inflicted. Can you, then, suppose it otherwise, in the divine, most perfect, government ? No ! but there is this terrible difference---that the utmost rigor of human justice extends no further, than to your bodies, your present circumstances, and your life ; which life is very short at best. When that is taken off, by a scandalous, speedy, execution ; the law is satisfied : and all memory of your shame, after a little time, may be buried in utter oblivion.

Whereas the judgment of God will not so quickly pass over ! As you are the work of his Hand, there is, within you, a spring of perpetual duration. So that, when your unbridled wickednesses have brought you to an  
igno-

ignominious Grave; they will not part with you there, but will carry you to another tribunal. And when you shall be far removed, from all the censures, as well as the praises of men; you will still be in the "hands of that Living God, into which it is a fearful thing for a rebellious creature to fall."

Again; what a wide difference is there, not only between the degree, but also between the certainty, of human and divine punishments!

Let a man's offence be ever so flagrant, his cause ever so hopeless, in an earthly court of judicature; the penalty does not always necessarily light upon him. Some shrewd advocate may be found, to stand up, and plead for him; to give the affair an unexpected turn; to make right and wrong change places! Or, even after sentence is past, an escape may not be impossible.

But hearken now, I entreat you, to the last, the finishing, question--"What will you do with the omniscient and omnipresent Judge of all the earth?" His wisdom can be imposed upon, by no specious arts of rhetoric, or subtleties of persuasion. His justice can be defeated by no quirks of law, or evasive ingenuities. Could you engage the tongues of



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of Angels and of Archangels, to display their eloquence in your behalf; their words would have no weight!

Whenever therefore an unrepenting sinner is cast at that celestial bar, where justice, mercy, and wisdom, decide with united voice; he is left in the condition so beautifully, though dreadfully, painted, by the holy Psalmist: "Whither shall he go from God's Spirit, or whither can he flee from His presence? Could he climb up to Heaven, God is there. Could he sink down into the unfathomed Abyss, even there also His arm would reach him, and His right hand would hold him!"

III. Well then; What are the practical inferences, proper to be drawn from the foregoing doctrine? Why,

I, "You cannot but recollect, with joyful and grateful hearts, the compassionate design of your Saviour's Gospel; which offers an unmerited, universal pardon, to sinful men, upon the most easy, the most equitable, terms."

While Job, you find, was contemplating himself as an offender against his Supreme Benefactor, though it were in some few instances

instances only, not by a long series of riots, or extravagance; yet how troubled and distracted were his thoughts:---“What shall I do unto Thee, O Thou Preserver of men!” But, upon a further prospect---upon new light and comfort given by Almighty God to his devoutly penitent soul---with what rapture does he break forth! “I know,” says he, “that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth!”

This is our blessed Redeemer; that “Lamb of God, who has taken away the sins of the world”----Who has solved all our doubts, dispelled all our fears; and no longer suffered it to remain an anxious query, “How the sinner shall appease the Maker of mankind;” “Who shall intercede for him;” or, “What he must do, to be saved?” Hear, I beseech you, the gracious conditions; thankfully accept them; and religiously fulfil them! “Repent, and be converted: and your sins shall be blotted out: nay, ye shall receive an eternal reward, at the hand of your Lord.”

Finally, then; if you rightly consider all that I have said, you cannot help being convinced,



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convinced, "What accumulated guilt there  
"lies upon the unreformed vices of a Chris-  
"tian, above those of any other person."

St. Paul, you know, affirms, concerning  
even the corrupt Heathens; that "They were  
"without excuse." Concerning the Jews,  
he says; that "Every transgression" (of their  
inferior law) "received a just recompence  
"of reward. He that despised Moses his  
"law, died without mercy."

And was it so, under the mere light of  
nature? Was it so, under the earlier, the  
fainter, discovery, or revelation, of God's  
Will?---I shall leave the Application, in the  
same Apostle's words, to be conscientiously  
made and improved by you all. "Of how  
"much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall  
"he" (that christian) "be thought worthy,  
"who" (by a profligate, unchristian life)-  
"hath trodden under foot the Son of God;  
"hath counted the blood of the covenant  
"wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy  
"thing; and hath done despite to the Spirit  
"of Grace?"--Know therefore, and remember  
well; "Who it is, that has said, Vengeance  
"is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord!"

To Whom be glory for ever! Amen.

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continued. "What accumulated guilt there  
 lies upon the unrepentant sinner of a Christ-  
 "that abominable of any other person."  
 "But you have just said, 'I have been  
 even the corrupt sinner, that I have been  
 "without excuse." Concerning the Jews  
 he says, that "they crucified him for their  
 interior part." "I received a just recompense  
 "of reward." The churchman's blood is  
 "low, but without mercy."  
 "And was it so, under the same light?  
 nature? Was it not under the same  
 "light, discovered the revelation of God?  
 Will--I will leave the Application, in the  
 same Apostle's words, to be conscientiously  
 made and approved by you all. "Of how  
 "much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall  
 "he (that Christian) be thought worthy,  
 "who (by a positive, unchristian life)  
 "thus trodden under foot the Son of God;  
 "hath counted the blood of the covenant  
 "wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy  
 "thing; and hath done despite to the Spirit  
 "of Grace?" "Know therefore, and remember  
 well; "Who it is, that has said, 'Vengeance  
 "is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."  
 To Whom be glory for ever, Amen.  
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# SERMON XXVIII.

2 PETER iii. 11, 12.

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God!*

THE “day of God,” and the “great day  
“of the Lord,” are expressions so frequent, as well as delivered with such emphasis, throughout the sacred writings; that it is our highest concern, both to understand, and to consider well, what they contain, as lessons for the direction of our christian life.

They denote the Messiah's First, or his Second Coming, into the world:—the wonderful effects, attending either of those signal events; the revolutions and alterations

made, or to be made, at either time of his appearance; being generally painted in the same sublime strain of figurative language.

Thus, the revolutions in the Jewish state and religion; the destruction of their temple and polity; with the remarkable changes in the Heathen nations, consequent upon our Lord's First Coming, upon the progress of his religion, or kingdom; are pointed out by such lofty images, as "Turning the sun in, to darkness, and the moon into blood;" the "Falling of stars from heaven;" the "Shaking of heaven and earth." Suns, moons, and stars, being figures used in that language, to signify the religious and civil governments, the princes and great officers, of this world.

So likewise, Christ's Second appearance, to "Judge the quick and dead," to finish God's whole dispensation towards mankind, is usually displayed with some grand characters, some distinguishing circumstances;---such as those in the chapter of St. Peter, a part whereof I have chosen for my Text; and various others, which I will mention afterwards.

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In treating further upon this passage, I shall be led to speak concerning that illustrious event, the "day of God," or his universal judgment, after the following method.

I. To give you the most striking and material descriptions of this judgment, as they lie in the holy scriptures.

II. To collect the several interesting truths, which they contain; to digest these truths, into different propositions; to shew you the order and reasonableness of each.

III. To lay before you the inferences, or practical considerations, naturally arising from the subject; that I may the more strongly convince you, "What manner of persons ye ought to be, in all holy conversation."

I. It would be an endless attempt to repeat the unnumbered texts, wherein this eminent work of Christ, his final judgment, is represented; by the Prophets, Himself, and his Apostles. Be contented, then, with a few, that seem the plainest among them. The first authority I shall cite, is the great Prophet Daniel.

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“ Behold, one like the Son of Man, came  
 “ with the clouds of heaven : and there  
 “ was given him dominion, glory, and a  
 “ kingdom : that all people, nations, and  
 “ languages, should serve Him.” Again,  
 more expressly ; “ Many” (he means All)  
 “ who sleep in the dust of the earth, shall  
 “ awake ; some to everlasting life, some to  
 “ shame and everlasting contempt. And they  
 “ that be wise, shall shine as the brightness  
 “ of the firmament : they that turn many  
 “ to righteousness, as the stars for ever and  
 “ ever.”

Our blessed Saviour follows the language,  
 used by the antient Prophets. “ The Son  
 “ of Man shall come in the clouds of hea-  
 “ ven, in power and great glory ; and all the  
 “ holy Angels with Him. And He shall sit  
 “ upon a glorious throne. And before Him  
 “ shall be gathered all nations. And He  
 “ shall separate them, one from another ; as  
 “ a shepherd divideth his sheep from the  
 “ goats. And He shall set the one on his  
 “ right hand, the other on his left. Then  
 “ shall the King say to them on his right  
 “ hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father,  
 “ inherit the kingdom prepared for you from  
 “ the



“ the foundation of the world. And to  
 “ them on his left hand, He shall say, Depart  
 “ from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire,  
 “ prepared for the Devil and his Angels.”

St. Paul teaches us, what our Lord had done  
 before ; but mentions some additional par-  
 ticulars. “ The Lord Jesus shall be revealed  
 “ from heaven, with his mighty Angels ; in  
 “ flaming fire ; taking vengeance on them  
 “ that know not God, and obey not his  
 “ Gospel ; who shall be punished with ever-  
 “ lasting destruction.” And again, elsewhere :  
 “ The Lord himself shall descend from hea-  
 “ ven, with the voice of the Archangel, and  
 “ with the trump of God : and the dead in  
 “ Christ, shall rise first. Then we who re-  
 “ main” (such good men, as are alive at the  
 time) “ shall be changed ; be cloathed with  
 “ celestial bodies ; and be caught up, toge-  
 “ ther with those departed Christians, to  
 “ meet the Lord in the air, and to live with  
 “ Him for ever.”

St. Peter, in the verse preceeding the Text,  
 expatiates yet further, upon the wonders that  
 will be effected on this tremendous day.

“ The day of the Lord will come as a thief  
 “ in the night” (suddenly and terribly to the  
 wicked)

wicked) "in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." And in the seventh verse; "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word" (the Word, or Will, of God, who drowned the ancient world) "are kept in store; reserved unto Fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

St. Jude comes next; and tells us a circumstance, which Christ himself had already hinted; namely, that "the wicked Angels will then be judged and condemned, together with wicked men."—"The Angels, who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." And presently after; "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute judgment upon All;" Angels, as well as men.

Lastly; St. John, who closes the Scriptures, the sacred books of God; closes also the account of the resurrection, and final judgment, "I saw a white" (a bright, a splendid)



splendid) "throne, and Him" (Christ) "that  
 "sat thereon: from whose face the earth and  
 "the heaven fled away; and there was no  
 "place for them:"---that is, the greatest of  
 all revolutions in the world, was now brought  
 to pass. "And I saw the dead, small and  
 "great, stand before God. And the books  
 "were opened. And the dead were judged  
 "out of the things, which were written in  
 "those books; according to their works.  
 "And Death and Hell" (it should be, Death  
 and the Grave) "were cast into the lake of  
 "fire"---that is, they were destroyed---  
 there was no more dying, now the judg-  
 ment was come. "And the Devil that de-  
 "ceived men, the Beast, and the false Pro-  
 "phet" (all corrupters of true religion, all  
 cruel seducers or tempters of others, to  
 what is evil) "were cast into the lake of  
 "brimstone, and shall be tormented day  
 "and night for ever and ever!"

These are some of the principal accounts,  
 which God has given us, concerning his  
 future, universal judgment. Let us now  
 turn our thoughts to the several truths,  
 contained in, or deducible from, them.

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II. It is no difficult matter, that requires profound criticism; to distinguish between what is merely figurative ornament, and what is real, or will be literally fulfilled, in the foregoing scriptures. For example,--When our Lord is described, as "sitting upon a throne of judgment;" as "gathering all nations before Him, with the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of an Archangel;" ---this may be taken as a familiar allusion to the antient custom among mankind; whose Rulers and Judges sat upon thrones, and employed Heralds and Trumpeters to summon their people together, on public occasions.

The blowing a trumpet, is a thought, originally found in the Prophet Isaiah: where, foreseeing the signal revolutions that would happen upon earth, in consequence of the Messiah's appearance; "It shall come to pass," says he, "on that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown." So, in St. John's Revelation, the several divine judgments, which will be solemnly executed against the apostate Romish Church, are set forth under the image of seven trumpets, and seven vials filled with God Almighty's wrath.

Again;



Again; when books are said to be opened, and men to be judged out of those books; it is but an apt, a beautiful similitude, borrowed from human courts of judicature; and only means that, ‘As the written laws of any country, are the rule by which earthly judges give sentence; so the word of God, or the precepts of his Gospel, are the rule, whereby all men shall be tried at this heavenly assize.’

Thus far (as perhaps in some few other instances) the figure may take place; the more easily to impress upon our minds a lively idea of this grand event. But the remaining parts of these representations, contain real truths, facts the most interesting and important. I shall have time to remark such of them only, as more immediately concern us. The first of which is, ‘The heavenly pomp, wherein our Judge will appear; with all the holy Angels; with ten thousands of his Saints!’

And that you may not even suspect this to be a needless piece of empty pageantry, but may consider it as something infinitely above the foppish parade of human grandeur, or ambition; let me remind you, how agreeable

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it is to the whole course of God's dispensations with mankind; how wisely it is adapted to his gracious designs, and government of the whole rational world.

When man was first created, the sacred Scriptures plainly intimate, that the great Creator's providential purposes towards him, were communicated to those blessed Spirits, the attendants of the celestial court. Job informs you, that "they sang, and shouted for joy." St. Peter, speaking about the Gospel-dispensation, says, that "the Angels desired" (took a pleasure) "to look into it." The word, in the original, signifies to examine or contemplate, to pry or look earnestly into a thing. So "the ancient Prophets" (as he tells us in the same place) "inquired and searched diligently into the meaning and circumstances of what the Holy Spirit had revealed to them, concerning Christ's sufferings for man, and the glories of his kingdom." Moreover, the Jewish Law was delivered, not only in the presence of these Angels, but by their ministration. The Son of God, during his Ministry upon earth, for reforming and redeeming mankind,



kind; was attended by them. They graced his Birth; adorned his Sepulchre; and were his bright Retinue, in his triumphant Ascent into Heaven. Finally; to the Apostles of Christ, they were the celestial Guardians; to us, and all his faithful disciples, they are "ministering Spirits," by whose kind assistance we become "heirs of salvation."

Was it not expedient therefore, that this same heavenly Host should be witnesses of God's great, his final dispensation to the World---they, who have been so long, so constantly employed, under the Lord and Saviour and Judge, in the administration of it? Was it not fit that they, who have seen all the merciful steps of divine providence over man, should likewise see that providence completed, in a judgment of impartial truth, justice, and righteousness? Was it not highly proper, that they, who, under God's banner, have warred against the adversaries of his kingdom, should be for ever established in their fidelity, by seeing his last chains put upon them; by beholding them banished into their miserable and final abode?

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In short, wise it must needs be, that the whole rational creation should be thus effectually warned, edified, and improved; by having before their eyes, the wretched consequences of sin; by viewing the opposite blessed fruits of virtue; the honour of the divine laws vindicated; equity, mercy, and bounty, shining forth, throughout all God's dealings with his moral subjects.---You see then, from the strongest, the most obvious, reasons, that the future judgment will be, that it ought to be, awful, solemn, and conspicuous.

2. The second thing I remark, as necessary for your understanding the foregoing scriptures, is; "The regular progress of this resurrection, and universal judgment, answering to its happy or dreadful influences, upon virtuous or wicked men."

It will be sudden indeed, in the truest sense of that word---alarming, terrible, inevitable, to vicious Livers. But it will not be suddenly, or in a very short time, concluded. It contains matters, that are to be gradually performed. It is not to be the work of a single day: and might more strictly be called the time, than the day of



of judgment. The Scriptures therefore, in several places, stile it those days, and that time.

There will be a double resurrection: a two-fold judgment will be passed. "The dead in Christ, shall rise first:" and of them, "every man in his own order." Which probably means, that 'Each Christian shall have the preference in point of time, or the first advancement to heavenly bliss and glory, proportioned to his virtues, or to his patient sufferings, upon earth.'

And here, how welcome will be the change! how inexpressibly happy will be its consequences! St. Paul has set them in a light so beautiful, as surpasses all human rhetoric. He compares this summons of good Christians to judgment, with that of the Jewish People when God gave them their law. That manifestation of the Divine Presence on Mount Sinai, was accompanied with such terrors; that Moses himself tells them, "He feared and quaked," at the very remembrance of it. So the case might well be, with a people conscious of their guilt, of their repeated sins against  
their

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their Lawgiver ! But how joyfully has the Apostle pictured the difference ! “ Ye are not  
 “ come to the mount that burned with fire,  
 “ nor to blackness and darkness and tempest :  
 “ but Ye are come to mount Sion, to the  
 “ heavenly Jerusalem, to the City of the  
 “ living God !”

The trumpet, which Ye shall hear, will not astonish or dismay you ; but will call you up to the “ innumerable company of An-  
 “ gels ; to the “ spirits of just men made  
 “ perfect ;” to be incorporated into their divine society ; to receive your Saviour, the Mediator of the New Covenant ; to be clothed by Him with spiritual bodies, those immortal vehicles which will transport you above the clouds, where you shall “ meet  
 “ your Lord in the air, and thenceforth be  
 “ with Him for ever.”

Thus will be fulfilled the words of St. John :—“ This is the first resurrection.  
 “ Blessed and holy are they, who shall have  
 “ their part in the first resurrection !”

If you would now see the contrary state of things and persons, on this decisive day ; my next observation will shew it you.

3. According



3. According to the order of these judicial proceedings, when the universal Lord has thus happily provided for his faithful servants; "then" says St. Paul, "cometh the end, when He shall put all enemies under his feet;" shall make them rise, to their condemnation, and their punishment. When the righteous shall be lifted up from the earth, the unrighteous will be left to perish in its ruins. For "the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." And wherefore burnt up? Why, our Apostle tells you expressly---"for the judgment and perdition of ungodly men." It is "reserved unto fire," for the same use, to which the flood of water served, in the day of the old rebellious world. It was then destroyed; yet not so destroyed, as never more to become an habitable world. Nor can we be sure, but that, when the end of punishing the wicked by fire shall be fully accomplished, it may again be restored, for some future good purposes of the all-wise Providence, to the length whereof no mortal eye, or imagination, can reach!

From all that has been said, two points of instruction will arise, and help to cure certain

tain prejudices, under which some persons labour.

First : None among you, need trouble their heads, with framing conjectures, about the particular place of Hell. St. Peter has here marked it out to you. " This earth of  
" ours, will be set on fire. The virtuous  
" will be withdrawn from it. The wicked  
" will remain in it; for their destruction;  
" and as the scene of their sufferings."

Secondly : Hence we also learn, that  
" Neither Devils nor sinful men are, or shall  
" be, in their proper Hell; their last mansion  
" of torment; nor good and righteous souls  
" in their proper Heaven; until this day of  
" judgment." Such is the clear tenor of the Scriptures I have cited, as of others without number; and such was the opinion, espoused by the wisest among the primitive Christians.

Till that fatal hour arrives, both the just and the unjust are in their Maker's hand: where let us leave them----the one, under the dismal foresight of vengeance, of fiery indignation; the other, under the delightful, infallible expectation, of everlasting felicity and reward.

Hitherto



Hitherto we have speculatively surveyed what the scripture has taught us, concerning this "great day of the Lord." I should now, as my capital business, direct your attention to those moral inferences from the subject, which may affect your practical life; which the Text itself suggests, as the universal application of the whole doctrine. "Seeing  
 " that all these things shall be dissolved, what  
 " manner of persons ought ye to be, in all  
 " holy conversation!" But properly to pursue this application, will be a sufficient employment for another discourse.

To the King Eternal---

I think we have sufficiently surveyed  
 what the Scripture has taught us, concerning  
 this great day of the Lord. I should now  
 say, Capital Sermon, but I have no more  
 to say on this subject, than what I have  
 already said. I have said, which the  
 Lord will, is good, as the universal appli-  
 cation of the whole doctrine. "Seeing  
 that all these things shall be dissolved, what  
 manner of persons ought ye to be, in all  
 holy conversation? But properly to you-  
 and this application, will be a sufficient con-  
 clusion for another discourse.

To the King Eternal.

O Lord, I have said, which the Lord will, is good, as the universal appli-  
 cation of the whole doctrine. "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what  
 manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation? But properly to you-  
 and this application, will be a sufficient conclusion for another discourse.



## S E R M O N XXIX.

2 PETER iii. 11, 12.

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved,  
what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all  
holy conversation and godliness; looking for,  
and hasting unto, the coming of the day of  
God!*

OUR blessed Saviour's Second coming to judge the world, which the holy scriptures stile the Day, and the Great Day, of the Lord, is what I purposed discoursing upon, from these words. I have therefore already, as the first part of the method I laid down, collected together, and set before you, the principal scripture-passages, that were intended to describe the most material circumstances of this interesting transaction. From these I gathered, and digested into several articles, some among the more important truths,

contained in them; shewing you the order and propriety of each:----Such as,

1. The solemnity and magnificence, with which Christ our Judge will appear; escorted by all the heavenly Host.

2. The regular progress of these great events, the resurrection and final judgment; answering to the happy or dreadful effects, which it was designed they should produce, on the minds and conditions of virtuous or sinful men.

3. The concluding, and most awful, part of the scene; "the burning this earth, on which we live, by fire."

III. It now remains, as the business reserved for the present discourse, that I direct your thoughts to those words of the Text, that comprehend the practical inferences, which we should draw from the foregoing truths----What manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!

1. then; Take the truths abovementioned, in their regular order; and consider, "Whether it be not infinitely worth your while, whether it ought not to be matter of your most diligent concern, frequently to recol-

"lect



“lect the dread solemnity, that will attend  
 “the day of your judgment.” And if ever  
 you do think upon it, with the regard, which  
 the subject demands from you ; tell me, in  
 the sincerity of your hearts, whether the two  
 following reflections, do not immediately  
 strike you. First ; “ The shame, reproach,  
 “ and infamy, that awaits a dissolute, im-  
 “ moral life.”

Every man, who has not absolutely quenched  
 every spark of his rational nature, cannot  
 but feel in himself a sense of disgrace, treading  
 close upon every base principle and base ac-  
 tion. He cannot but see, what an ample  
 provision the good Creator has made, against  
 every species of iniquity ; by implanting in  
 us a passion, peculiarly calculated to restrain  
 us from it.

Shame is as natural to the human mind,  
 as fear, hatred, love, joy, or any other affec-  
 tion whatsoever. And though you should  
 suppose a flagitious action utterly impossible  
 to be discovered by the people about us ; yet  
 the sense of it, afflicts and burns us inwardly.  
 Which sense nothing can ever extinguish, but  
 inveterate habit ; but a taste, that has long  
 been vitiated.

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If, therefore, vice and shame are thus strongly cemented together, even in present nature; how must they appear, at the great day of God's judgment! Then will this disgrace, like all the other evils which we have wilfully brought upon ourselves, be let loose against us without all restraint; without any object, to divert, assuage, or interrupt it, You will then have no tender-hearted friend, to put the kind interpretation, the charitable construction, upon your past life. You will find no lewd companions, to countenance and help you out; no witty neighbours, to smother or drive away your shame, with their wonted merriment, complaisance, or ridicule. Your trial will all be solemn, serious, and impartial. God, your all-knowing Judge, is too wise to be imposed upon. Angels and virtuous Spirits are too good, to favour or defend malicious, unrepented wickedness.

Secondly: "Does not this same consideration awaken you to a clear sight, of  
 " the folly, as well as the guilt and turpitude, that accompanies all secret, private  
 " vices?"--It was the precept of an Heav-  
 " then Man, that has proved a reproach to many a Christian; " Of all mankind, revere  
 " Thyself



“Thyself the most:” meaning, that “You should blush to do any thing, alone and by yourself; which, in the face of others, you would be confounded at.” For the dishonour inseparable from every sinful action, is the same to the heart, to the conscience; as if ten thousand spectators had seen it, and given their opinions about it. But behold what an infinite difference there is, between the stage of this world, and the theatre of God’s last judgment!---Where it will signify nothing, whether your crimes have been artfully covered with the veil of night, or have impudently walked at high noon day. For “God shall judge the secrets of men, “by Jesus Christ; and shall bring to light, “all the hidden things of darkness.”

Come out therefore, from your foolish retirement! What safety can such shallow hypocrisy yield! Live in the secret chamber, learn to behave in the closet, as you would in the public streets; as if the doors were all thrown open about you. Accustom yourself to think, speak, and act, as if there was a window in your breast: since God, you know, will judge the very heart, that lodges there. “All things are naked

“and open unto the eyes of Him, with  
 “Whom you have to do.” Not only so,  
 but they will one day be spread open before  
 those very eyes of men, from which you  
 now so weakly labour to screen and to con-  
 ceal them.

2. Let us pass on to the next observation  
 I made: namely, “The directly opposite  
 “effects, the blessed or dreadful influences,  
 “which this most interesting Event will  
 “have, upon virtuous or sinful persons.”  
 Let us view these effects, as they are described  
 in holy scripture, with relation either to the  
 bodies or the souls of men; and see what les-  
 sons of good advice they contain.

Not only Scripture, but Nature, Reason,  
 Common Sense, will convince us, that an  
 human body, before it can enter the man-  
 sions of heavenly light and bliss, must be  
 exceedingly altered, be totally refined, from  
 its present gross, carnal state. --- How will it  
 then comfort, how will it lift up the  
 heart of a sincere Christian, to hear the voice  
 of that gracious Power, which “shall change  
 “his vile body, that it may become like unto  
 “his Saviour’s glorified body!”

But, in the mean time, how should this  
 remind



remind us all, of the religious duty, which we must now begin to exercise towards these same bodies; by not "suffering sin to reign in them, or obeying it in the lusts thereof," by "mortifying our members that are upon the earth, fornication, and all uncleanness;" by purifying with all imaginable care these mortal vessels, which are intended to be hereafter the vessels of honour and immortality!

What resistless evidence, what manifest propriety, do these christian, sacred commands, carry in them! How incongruous does it appear, that a body should be presented to God, as a fit member for the community of his spotless, glorified Saints; which you have all along been polluting, with sordid vices, with abominable gratifications. As if "flesh and blood," corrupt as you make it, corrupt as you leave it, could possibly "inherit the kingdom of God."

Oh no! If ever you hope to see these earthly tabernacles turned into shining temples, for your celestial habitation; it must be done by a generous manly conquest of their unruly passions, by a conscientious regulation of all their emotions, appetites, and desires.

Whereas,

Whereas, if you debase them, by low indulgences; if you fetter them to the earth, and sink them in earthly pleasures; never can they be worthy, never can they be able, to soar towards heaven: never can they "mount above the clouds, to meet the Lord  
"in the air, and to live for ever with the  
"Lord!"

By the same plain argument---If the happiness of our better part, the Soul or Mind, will, at that great day, consist in the perfection of its rational faculties; in the enlargement of its understanding, the improvement of its morals, the favour and blessing of its Creator; ---should not these considerations make us solicitous to be prepared for this final felicity, by beginning now to cultivate the virtues, on which it must be built; by setting out, and travelling forward, towards the heavenly life, wherein we shall then be completed; by growing continually in that love of God, in that pious faith and reliance upon Him, which will endear us to Him; in all that charity towards each other, which will render us fit for the company of Angels, amongst whom peace and love everlastingly dwell?

This



This is the "manner of persons," the "holy conversation," recommended here by St. Peter. "Such a life as this," says he, "will make you look with rapture, upon the prospect of the judgment-day---will make you hope for it, and wish for it----wish that you could quicken, could hasten on, its approach."

What has been last said, calls upon me to admonish all profligate, impenitent men; how different their case and situation will appear, in this day of righteous vengeance; that I may thence excite them (unless they are "past feeling") to a timely, as well as hearty, repentance.

If ever you look at all before you, and do not absolutely deride the whole notion of a future existence; what, think you, can be the state, where can be the place, of your future residence, or abode? A state of Rest, like that which "remaineth for the people of God," it cannot, in nature, possibly be. The sentiments, habits, dispositions, which you carry about you, and within you, will no way allow it. Fish may as well live upon the tops of trees, or men breathe and converse at the bottom of the ocean; tranquillity and

and confusion, love and hatred, discord and harmony, may as soon become one, and associate together; as even a vicious mind can enjoy the pleasures of a virtuous society, or the sublime delights of pure, exalted souls.

But moreover: what place do you suppose, will be assigned, on the day of judgment, to such among you, as I am now speaking about? If reason may be heard, Heaven cannot receive you. Advancement in rational perfections, cannot belong to you. All wise and good men will then take their final leave of you, to "enter into the joy of their Lord." Only the Earth, indeed, will still be left to you. But, if the word of God should prove true; this very "Earth" (the only paradise you have loved, or sought after) "with all that is therein, shall be burnt up"---nay, burnt up, for your punishment and perdition.

Mark, here, what a wise, though terrible provision, Divine Providence has made, against rebellious men! Remember it, all ye, that forget God! "This world, which you have all along been using as the scene of your vanities and debaucheries, of your revels in justice and impiety, will one day be converted into the horrid theatre of your  
 torment,



"torment, into the habitation of your misery  
 "and despair!" Wherein every one shall feel  
 and suffer, according to his temper, according  
 to his works: but "mighty men" (the  
 Great Ones in lewdness, or oppression)  
 "shall be mightily tormented."

Now, then, let us stand a while, and give  
 room for a little sedate reflection! Can you  
 possibly cast an eye forward, with the least  
 attention, to such a future catastrophe, with-  
 out having your love of the present world  
 somewhat damped, somewhat abated? Does  
 not the prospect somewhat humble your ideas  
 of all earthly felicity, riches, and grandeur?  
 Or must it always be, that "A world, every  
 'moment passing away, each day drawing on  
 'to rubbish and destruction, shall fill the  
 'hearts, shall dazzle the affections, of ra-  
 'tional, immortal, creatures?"  
 Will you never see the vanity, of a man's  
 pretending to the character of wisdom, and  
 yet selling all that he has; selling his con-  
 science; pawning his honour; forfeiting his  
 innocence; to purchase an estate; which, the  
 moment almost he is entered upon it, drops  
 and vanishes from under his feet? Is here no  
 discouragement, no dissuasive, to deter you  
 from

from toiling and drudging for the world? As if your houses could continue for ever; as if your greatness and your pomp, could reach the height of heaven; or the succession of the sons to the fathers, could equal the days of eternity! Striving for things, without ever once looking to the end of them! Not considering, that a state like this, so variable, so transitory, was certainly never meant, ought never to be thought of, as our fixed, or permanent home, but another and a better to be provided for; above all, that the good things of the world are bestowed upon you, with this memorable condition; that, "If you abuse them, you must perish at last in the ruins of them."

Which, 3, brings me to the only topick I have remaining for your recollection, under the present head. Namely, that "This fire, with whose fervent heat the very Elements shall melt, the Earth and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up---that this Fire is the painful instrument, destined for the punishment, of wicked Angels, as well as wicked men."

How great therefore, yet how just, will be the terrors of that punishment! How just,



just, I say, --- First, with respect to those reprobate Spirits, those Apostates from Heaven, who make the memory of their former bliss a spur, not to relenting for their folly, as it plainly and naturally should be, but to envying the good of all their fellow-subjects. Who have so long been the promoters, the precedents of vice, to the whole rational world. Who have been tempting all others, into rebellion against their Maker; and, to their utmost power, destroying the happiness of God's creatures, which is the glory of his creation. When all things, then, shall come to be adjusted, on this day of universal recompence; for the mischiefs they have been contriving, through a train of so many thousand years; for the cruel part they have acted, in ruining so many myriads of souls; Blessed God! what vengeance, what fiery indignation, can be too severe a penalty!

But these same unquenchable flames are intended also, it seems, for as many amongst us, as follow the example, as fight under the banner, of those warriors against God and his spiritual kingdom. Yet will the Almighty Judge appear supremely righteous, supremely equitable, in this last, as in all his other judgments.

judgments. Your punishment, though the same in kind, will not be the same in degree, with the punishment of the revolted Angels. It will be (and you will find that dreadful enough) in proportion only to the pride of your hearts, wherein you imitate that Lucifer, who first fell because He was proud; who is for ever lost, because He would not stoop again, or repent. It will be in proportion to such fraud, dishonesty, falsehood, in your words and dealings; whereby you become the children of Him, the Father of lies. Finally. It will be in sad proportion to the diabolical pains you have taken, the infernal arts you have employed, to corrupt, to entice, to betray one another, into iniquity, profaneness, and licentiousness. Here you put on the express image, every act gives you the strongest resemblance, of that accursed Being, whose names, in holy Scripture, signify Tempter, Deceiver, Enemy, and Destroyer.

It is now time I should conclude this subject. Which I shall do, with most earnestly exhorting you, that by none of the above-mentioned, nor by any the like transgressions, you will be so desperately inconsiderate, as



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to add fuel to your fire, and pain to your damnation ! But rather let us all, in due season, " lay hold on the hope that is set before us," on the pardon that is offered to the sincere reformation of our past sins. That so this day of eternal doom, may not " come upon us as a thief in the night ;" but we may be found among the number of those faithful servants, who wait with joy for their Lord's arrival, and for the " unfading crown of glory which He will then confer on all them that love his appearing."

To Him be praise and dominion, for ever. Amen.





## SERMON XXX.

TIMOTHY vi. 1.

*That the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed.*

**I**T is common in all languages, for the names or titles of persons, frequently to denote the persons themselves. And as in our own tongue, the King's Majesty signifies the King himself; so, in scripture-phrase, to glorify, to praise, or to blaspheme, the Name of God, is to do the one or the other towards the Divine Being himself.

To blaspheme any thing or person, is to raise a false, malicious, scandalous report, concerning it; to misrepresent it, to lay it under an ill fame, and an ill character, whether by words or deeds. Thus those Jews, who declared that "Our Saviour wrought his miracles through the help of the Devil,"

are said to have "blasphemed the Holy Spirit," through whose gracious interposition and influence they were performed. So Naboth the Jeshite was accused of "blaspheming God and the King;" that is, of uttering some expressions, plainly intended to lessen men's reverence for Almighty God; to bring Ahab, their Prince, into odium and disrepute.

Accordingly, when Christians are exhorted to take care, that "God's name and his doctrine be not blasphemed, by their manners, or conversation;" the meaning is, that 'no discredit be brought upon God's true religion,' that 'no unworthy notions about it be imbibed and cherished among mankind, from the vices, or the imprudences, of those who profess it.'

St. Paul, in the passage before us, gives this caution, particularly and immediately, to "servants that were under the yoke;" that is, to such Christians, as were slaves under Heathen Masters at the time of their conversion. He charges these slaves, to "count their masters worthy of all honour;" to continue serving them with "all good fidelity;" not to imagine that the Gospel released any man from



from his servitude, or dissolved any of his natural or civil obligations---an imagination, that would exceedingly injure themselves, as well as their whole christian Calling.

Here therefore let us especially observe, before we proceed any further; that “There  
“ is no class or degree of people throughout  
“ the christian world, but what have an im-  
“ portant share, and should have a conscienti-  
“ ous concern, both in advancing the glory  
“ of God, and in avoiding such behaviour as  
“ tends to dishonour his holy name, to cast a  
“ reproach on his sacred word and revelation.”

From the King that sits upon the throne to the lowest labourer in the field, or the humblest servant in the house, there is a duty and a care incumbent, a strict account to be given,

‘ By what discourse, actions, and demeanour,  
‘ they either adorn or disgrace, either recom-  
‘ mend or scandalize, the doctrine of God  
‘ their Saviour.’

In this extensive view then, I purpose treating the Apostle’s advice; as indispensably requisite for Christians, of whatever order or denomination. And, as I go along, I shall apply the argument more closely to Ourselves, under these Three characters.

I. As Christians, at large.

II. As reformed Christians.

III. As a particular Church, or branch, of such a Reformation.

I. First therefore. I make no doubt, that every man, who is sincere in professing any religion, has some tenderness for its credit and interest; that he wishes, and by all honest means would endeavour, to promote the knowledge, to spread the blessings of it, among his brethren. True piety towards God, equally concerns all mankind. The benefits attending it, should be diffused and propagated by every good man, to the utmost of his power. In this generous work, the Apostles of Christ spent their labours, and laid down their lives. The truly primitive Christians ran all hazards, endured all pains, to carry on and perfect it. And long would that blessed work have gone forward, but for the two pernicious evils, which then soon gave, which still now give, (and God alone can tell, when they will cease to give) a fatal check to its happy progress.

The evils I fix my eye upon, you may all easily know, because we have all severely felt them: namely, the "Perverting the doctrines,"



"trines," and "Corrupting the morals, of  
 "Christianity." For after Christians once  
 began to broach, to insist upon, and contend  
 about, several things, which had no connec-  
 tion with their religion; which could not  
 be found in any page of their Gospel; nay,  
 which were contradictory to the very stand-  
 ard, to the whole spirit, of that Gospel; alas,  
 their practises quickly became as extravagant,  
 as their principles: and they behaved as ill  
 towards each other, as an Heathen or a Jew  
 could be conceived to do towards any of  
 them. The world presently caught the  
 prejudice. It was obvious for the bulk  
 of mankind, to follow the current, popu-  
 lar, sentiment----to "judge about mens  
 "religion, by what the men themselves  
 "are;" to "conclude there can be very  
 "little godliness, where they see nothing  
 "but inhumanity."

( Thus sunk the reputation of our christian  
 cause, throughout the Eastern or Asiatic na-  
 tions. And God, as a just judgment upon  
 them, suffered it still to sink: till his name  
 and his doctrine were completely blasphemed  
 by the Mahometan Superstition, in those  
 original Christian Churches. And, at last,

the grand Apostacy in our Western Churches, put an end to all hopes, that the Gospel will find any reception among the Turks, or work any conversion among the Jews; who Both universally form their idea of Christianity, from the abominations of Popery.

For the Pope's Infallibility, the Worshiping Images, the Praying to Saints, the Impudent Impiety of Absolutions, the Infinite Nonsense of Transubstantiation---are all such monstrous stumbling-blocks to every Turk, who has common understanding, to every Jew, indeed to every Mortal who has the least apprehension concerning the nature of God, the nature of man, or the reason of things; that you cannot wonder the Mahometan abhors the name of Christ, and the Jew everlastingly blasphemes it.

Hence we see, by the writings of Abarbanel and other eminent Rabbins, that their arguments (I should rather say, their reproaches) against the Christian Revelation, are levelled entirely against the Popish System.

Then moreover, the cruel, persecuting spirit of the Romish Church, together with the detestable Sins, and even encouragements to sin, among the Clergy as well as Laity of that  
Com.



Communion, are so flagrant; that I am not at all surpris'd at the relation given by a very honest, learned Bishop of our own Church, who laboured much in converting Jews, and for that purpose frequently entered into an intimate correspondence with them.

He particularly mentions two considerable persons of that persuasion. One of whom, would never endure the least overture, or attempt towards his conversion; declaring, "he verily thought, if he should turn Christian, the debaucheries of Italy would make him blush to own that name." The Other, a Spanish Jew, pretended himself a convert; and openly boasted, that "He had now met with a religion, wherein he had nothing to do, but to tell his beads, and indulge his vices." The blasphemy, indeed, was the blasphemy of a Jew: but the occasion of it was given by those, who call themselves the infallible Christians.

Thus has our christian vocation suffered long and undeserved disgrace; through the depraved doctrines, the idolatrous worship, the violent practices, of the Apostate Church,

II. When a Reformation from these abuses, was set on foot; much better things might have

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have been expected. When the holy Scriptures were once more embraced, as the sole Rule of Faith; the world might well hope to see a final conclusion of spurious traditions, fraudulent interpretations, and human inventions. No longer deluded with silly superstitions, and a vast profusion of senseless formalities; there was the pleasing prospect, that we should have real, rational piety; that we should "worship our Maker in Spirit and in Truth." Indeed, God be praised, a great deal of this good was actually done: and many a sincere, devout Christian, reaped proportional light and blessing from it!

And had the Reformers proceeded upon the same maxims, on which they first set out;---had they continued to enforce those maxims, to govern their churches by them;---had they, after bravely shaking off the tyranny of Rome, exercised none but christian power themselves;---had they, after forsaking the pretended infallible Guide, followed the clear authentic instructions of God's own Word;---had they, when separated from that domineering Communion, taken care not to domineer over each other, not to divide and subdivide among themselves, or persecute  
their



their brethren for non-compliance with their arbitrary determinations; --- in fine, had they, on discovering, and withdrawing from, the corruptions of the revolted Church, conscientiously practised the genuine virtues of the everlasting Gospel; --- what an amiable simplicity, what resistless evidence, would the native Christianity, the truly reformed Church of Christ, have appeared to carry in it? How must its doctrines, its laws and discipline, have charmed the eyes, have won the admiration and esteem, of all that beheld their noble influence upon the manners of its professors!

But when once the love of temporal power began to mix itself with the love of spiritual duties, and by degrees to get the ascendancy; when Protestants were contented with abandoning the absurd tenets of Popery, without departing from the practical vices of the Papist; --- what a figure must such a Reformation be conceived to make, in the sight either of true friends, or intelligent enemies! How should it ever be likely to attract the regard of an Heathen; to soften the prejudices of a Jew; to preserve "God's Name, or his "Doctrine," from their universal blasphemy and contempt!

III. Let

III. Let us set one step further, and apply all this to Ourselves, to our own Church; as a particular, a capital branch, of the Reformation abovementioned.

I believe I may fairly say, that we have as few, if not fewer errors, in our national, established system of religion, than any among our Sister Protestants Communities. And I hope that so much light, so much good learning, is diffused; as will rectify, in due time, those which may be presumed still to remain. But if, amidst all these advantages, we have as many, especially if we have more vices, than any of our neighbours; the certain inference will be this---that "We are in a condition  
 "far worse, than the very worst of them;  
 "and shall stand charged with having given  
 "our Saviour's enemies, more just occasion,  
 "to blaspheme his name, to scandalize his  
 "doctrine."

For with what face can we stile ourselves  
 "The strength and glory of the Protestant-  
 "Reformation," while our luxury, our ambition, our open licentiousness, show us to be the very same wicked creatures, which those wicked doctrines would have taught us to be, and of being which, we affected to appear so

con-



conscientiously fearful? What triumph would you afford to a sensible, artful Papist; by informing him, that 'You forsook the communion of the Romish Church, because it was corrupt and unchristian; to enter into Another Church, whose members live more corruptly, than the most unenlightened Heathens!' That 'You have been purging your principles, from the pollutions of other people; then refining again, among yourselves, and upon each other; and yet, after all, have attained no higher pitch of real religion, than the deluded Christians whose errors you renounced; and are utterly at a loss to answer the reproaches, of either Mahometan, Jew, or Pagan!'

There may be, I make no question there is, a great number of our loose, or even profligate Livers; on whom though neither duty nor interest can prevail, to become virtuous; yet they have no absolute, settled antipathy, against what is good. They do not wish to see Christianity totally discarded, or banished out of the world! They would not blaspheme Christ with their own mouths, nor take pleasure in hearing others do it!

But

But how wide is this, from being innocent; how remote from being able to plead, "Not 'highly guilty!'" How vain is it, to think of separating the cause, from its certain, never-failing effects! How can you suffer yourselves to forget, that notorious actions will always draw down more infamy, both upon yourselves, and your religion; than mere words can possibly do! The ignorant and unbelieving world, will evermore estimate the value of any religion, by the lives of the men who profess it. And though your lips were ever so closely sealed, your tongues ever so strongly tied up, from blaspheming your Maker's Name, or scandalizing his Gospel; your vicious practices will give vent to the foulest scandal, will speak the loudest blasphemies!

Hearken therefore, I beseech you, while I repeat, and most earnestly press upon your hearts, the just observation which I made, at my entrance into this subject. St. Paul, I there told you, insists, that the very christian servants, even poor slaves "under the yoke," had it in their power (and he lays it as a matter of the greatest weight, on their consciences) either to glorify God, by a peaceable, dutiful  
behaviour;



S E R M O N XXX. . 299

behaviour, or to throw odium and blame upon his divine doctrine, by a rude and a rebellious one.

And is such the case, with the lowest, the least important order of our species? How then can any Christian who bears superior rank, superior influence, imagine himself uninterested, or unconcerned, in so momentous an affair?

How can the christian Magistrate behold unmoved, or bear with patient silence, the horrid imprecations, the lewdness, obscenity and profaneness, of the people that are about him, and under him---without restraint or rebuke---without execution of legal punishment---without knowing and feeling that, through his neglect in the grand office of all others, God's holy Name, and supreme Authority, is thus publicly affronted and blasphemed!

Or what part does that Great Man, or that Gentleman act, towards his Church and his Country: from whose indecent, unguarded freedoms, his Servants, all his Inferiors and Dependents, can scarce possibly avoid learning, to think lightly, to talk irreverently, about the Religion of their Gracious Redeemer?

More

More especially still; what shall we say, what must we judge, concerning that Protestant Minister of Christ, who spends his life in vain pleasures, or in worldly pursuits; whose bad example (beyond that of any person) is disgraceful to the Gospel of God, as well as injurious to the salvation of men!

But the Apostle's admonition, as I have twice already shewn you, includes us all, and excepts none. Therefore let not the meanest, the most insignificant creature among you, harbour a thought, that "He can be irreligious, or drunken, or debauched, by himself alone, without any relation to others."

Alas! You live in society, and have your proper duties in it, as much as the highest Peer of the realm. Your vices, as well as his (like the infection of a pestilence) reach the eyes, the ears, and at length the hearts, of those who dwell around you. Good people are grieved and offended at you: strangers are amazed at you: the enemies of God rejoice over you, grow confirmed in their immorality and infidelity. Thus, whether you design it or no, you damp all veneration for sobriety (for every thing else, that ought to be sacred) in your children, in your families, in your neighbours.



neighbourhood; and ruin, as far as you can ruin, your whole country!

To close the subject---What reply could we of this age, of this church and kingdom, devise in our behalf; should such a severe question be asked about Us, as was asked by our Saviour concerning the men of his own time and nation----“Who they were, that  
“must answer for the blood of all the  
“Prophets that had been shed, from the  
“blood of righteous Abel, to the last Pro-  
“phet that was slain?”

If, I say, it should in like manner be demanded; “Who they are, that must answer  
“for all the contempt of serious piety; for  
“all the blasphemous cavils that have been  
“raised against God’s Name and his Doctrine,  
“since the happy change of the Reformation  
“--since the time of our deliverance from the  
“miseries of Popish darkness---since the days  
“of those providential mercies, that have been  
“demonstrated in our \* late signal victories,  
“in the unspeakable blessings we now enjoy,  
“of knowledge and learning, of moderation  
“and liberty;”---What Reply could any

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\* This refers to the Victories of the Duke of Marlborough.

man invent, but that very one, given by our heavenly Master: "Verily, I say unto you, all this shall be required of this generation!"

To God, only wise---



# SERMON XXXI.

JOHN xviii. 36.

*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.*

**I** THINK the best method I can take in discoursing upon this Text, will be;

I. To shew you with what view, and on what occasion, our blessed Master made this declaration, that "His kingdom is not of this world;" what He more immediately, more particularly, meant by these words:

II. In what senses, it is generally and universally true, that "Christ's is not a worldly kingdom.

III. What is the proper use, the proper application, of this doctrine.

I, then, It is certain from all history, that about the time our Saviour was born, the Jews fully expected the Coming of Christ, their Messiah, the great Prince fore-

told by Daniel and all their Prophets. It is also equally certain that, totally misunderstanding the scope of these prophecies and the nature of his divine government, they imagined He would appear, not as a spiritual, but as a temporal Saviour; not as an humble teacher of righteousness, or a "prince of peace;" but as a splendid Earthly Monarch; who would deliver their nation, not from the dominion of Sin, but from the dominion of the Romans, to whom they, as well as all the nations about them, had long been tributary; and would make Jerusalem, instead of Rome, the Sovereign Mistress of the World.

When therefore our Lord's life, manners and doctrine, far from flattering or cherishing, utterly blasted these fond hopes; the more ignorant among the populace, and all your men of political, ambitious views, unmoved by the excellent things He had taught them, by the mighty works He had done before their eyes, quickly renounced all Faith in Him as their Messiah, became his implacable enemies, and were determined if possible to cut Him off. The most likely way to effect which, (especially as all the

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wiser people firmly believed Him to be the true Messiah) was, "The rendering Him obnoxious to the Roman Government, or to the Roman Governor of Judea," without whose authority they could not inflict any capital punishment.

Accordingly, having apprehended Him, they carried Him before Pilate their present Governor; and charged Him with doing the very thing, which they ardently wished to have done---with setting himself up, for King of the Jews; with going about the country, to raise a party, to sow sedition among the people; that, as soon as his scheme was ripe for execution, He might put himself at their head, and make an open revolt. "They began to accuse Him," as you are told by St. Luke, "saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, saying that He himself is Christ, a King."

Upon this Pilate, as you read in the thirty-third verse of the chapter before us, entered into the Judgment-Hall; and calling Jesus, asked Him a question, which he would otherwise never once have dreamt of asking

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Him---“ Art thou the King of the Jews?  
 “ Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this  
 “ thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee  
 “ of me? Pilate answered, am I a Jew?  
 “ Thine own nation, and the Chief Priests,  
 “ have delivered thee unto me: What hast  
 “ thou done?” Our blessed Master replies,  
 in the words of the Text---“ My kingdom  
 “ is not of this world: if my kingdom  
 “ were of this world, then would my ser-  
 “ vants fight, that I should not be delivered  
 “ to the Jews: but now is my kingdom  
 “ not from hence.”

Which reply of our Lord, may be thus  
 more largely expressed---“ I confess, I am  
 “ a king; but not in the light, wherein my  
 “ accusers would have you understand that  
 “ word. I pretend to no civil jurisdiction;  
 “ either in Judea, or elsewhere. My king-  
 “ dom is not advanced by war, or the sword;  
 “ and has neither fleet nor army, to support  
 “ it. I suffered myself to be taken, with-  
 “ out the least resistance, even by the weak  
 “ rabble of the Jews: and therefore am very  
 “ unlikely to contend with Cesar, or to op-  
 “ pose the powers of Rome. Be assured  
 “ then, that no danger will arise from Me,  
 “ either



“either to the Emperor himself, or to any  
“that are put in authority under him.”

With this answer, confirmed by the whole  
personal appearance, character, and conduct,  
of his prisoner, the Governor was perfectly  
satisfied: And looking upon the charge  
brought against Him, to be absolutely ri-  
diculous, as well as infamous; thought of  
nothing but dismissing Him, without fur-  
ther trouble. So “he went out again to  
“the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in  
“Him no fault at all. But ye have a cus-  
“tom, that I should release unto you One  
“at the passover: Will ye therefore, that  
“I release unto you the King of the Jews?  
“Then cried they all again, not this man,  
“but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a rob-  
“ber.”

This was the occasion, upon which the  
words before us, were originally spoken;  
and is the primitive, the peculiar sense, in  
which we are to interpret our Saviour’s de-  
claration, that “his kingdom is not of this  
“world.”

II. Let us now inquire, in what more  
general acceptations we must understand, that  
“Christ’s is not a worldly kingdom.”

I. Our Lord's kingdom; that is, his Gospel; the religious and moral government, whereof He is the head, and was the first founder;---this kingdom, I say, is not of this world, but differs essentially from all the kingdoms which are, or ever were of this world, in that "it is altogether "a spiritual kingdom." Its laws are entirely of a spiritual nature. Its dominion is exercised over the mind, over the will and affections. Its purpose is, to moderate our desires, to keep our passions within due bounds; to give us pure, pious, and virtuous inclinations; such as are the foundation of all good behaviour, and without which no man can be a good subject of any kingdom whatsoever; or discharge his duty with honour, in any one supposable office or relation throughout life.

The rulers of this world enact laws, to regulate mens outward actions: but there they stop, and can penetrate no deeper. Whereas religion binds the conscience, reforms the inward, real man, extends its influence to his thoughts and intentions; which no human power or policy can possibly reach, and therefore never attempts it.

Our



# SERMON XXXI. 303

Our heavenly Governor has given his subjects one universal principle of action, that comprehends, and indispensably concerns, them all; which is, "the love and fear of God, the Supreme Potentate;" a constant sense of our dependance, upon Him, and his providence; of his infinite goodness to us, and infinite power over us: ----who does not barely see our actions, but intimately knows our hearts; whose kingdom is the whole creation; who is therefore King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; from whom all earthly Monarchs derive, not their dominion only, but their very Being!

Now this, as I have often remarked to you, is beyond expression the highest, the noblest principle, that man, or any rational creature, can act upon. It is this principle alone, upon which any genuine morality can be established, upon which any solid or lasting virtue can be built; ----which can govern us equally, at all times, in all situations; which can restrain us alike from what is evil or indecent, in the secret chamber, as in the open market-place; which, to say the whole at once, can make us such in deed  
and

and in truth, as we would appear to be in the eyes of the world. Whence might easily be shewn, how infinitely serviceable is true religion in general, and Christianity in particular, to the prosperity of every community, every political system, under the sun. But let us return to the Text.

The institutions devised by the very wisest politicians, or lawgivers, among mankind, are able to secure, and profess to secure, nothing more than the bodies, the temporal property, the worldly felicity, of their subjects: and it is a good point, to secure even these. But the laws delivered by our divine Legislator, have a superior object in view. They are calculated for our final, our everlasting, benefit, to render us happy, not only upon earth (for that they would do most effectually, if we would obey them) but afterwards in heaven. The Former look no further, than to the end of our present state: the Latter look far beyond that fleeting, uncertain period; and make provision for our well-being on the other side the Grave, even to all eternity.

For these reasons then, you see, the Gospel-Institution may very naturally, in a very clear



clear general sense, be styled 'A government, or a kingdom, but not of this world.'

2. Christianity is rightly defined, 'A kingdom not of this world;' because its rewards and punishments are not of this world.

Rewards and punishments being a main support, without which all governments must fall; human governors, for the immediate preservation of peace and good order among their people, are obliged to punish, or suppress enormities, as soon as possible after they are committed: But Christ postpones the retribution of His subjects, to a future day of account. And the reason why He does so, is evidently this---Religion considers our present life, as a state of probation: in which God, after laying every man's duty plainly before him, gives him full scope of action; full liberty to qualify himself for that future state, wherein he is to receive the final recompence of all his present conduct.

But, though the rewards of Christ's kingdom have respect to a future world; yet Christians, in common with all mankind, are often rewarded and punished (that is, they

they often feel the beneficial or hurtful effects of their own behaviour) even in the present world. For virtue, in the very nature of things, of human society, is attended with many signal advantages, procures men various present blessings: while debauchery and iniquity bring upon them poverty, and bodily diseases; infamy and punishment, from the laws of their country; with ten thousand other present evils. And Christians, as they behave well or ill, unavoidably enjoy or suffer these consequences, without the least exemption.

When therefore I said, that "the rewards and punishments of Christ's kingdom, are not dispensed in the present life;" I meant those rewards and punishments, which are proper, which are peculiar, to his kingdom; which belong to it as such, or as it is distinguished from all earthly kingdoms; and which are undoubtedly reserved till that solemn day, when "He shall come to judge the quick and dead, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Well then might our heavenly King declare, "My kingdom is not from hence; since his subjects are to have their final abode,



abode, and each of them his proper portion of reward, not in this world, but in a distant, in a future, one.

Christ, as Lawgiver of the christian kingdom, excels all human Governors, whether you consider the intrinsic goodness of his laws; or, more especially still, the consummate wisdom, with which they will be carried into execution.

The Grandees of this world are frail and fallible, as other mortals, are subject to the common passions and infirmities, that accompany human nature. Wherefore the laws they make, will of course have many defects; will sometimes be partial, and unjust. But though they themselves were ever so uncorrupt, their laws ever so judiciously formed; yet they must inevitably fall short, in the administration of those laws. For no magistrate or judge upon earth, can possibly know the full, strict merits, of any one cause, that comes before him; for which reason, his judgment must always be defective. Many circumstances are utterly invisible to him. Many others will escape his most shrewd observation. He cannot possibly look into the hearts of men, where all

all their guilt, where all their virtue, lies. Consequently he cannot, were he ever so desirous, either confer honours or inflict penalties, in exact proportion to the real worth and demerits of persons.

Hence it is, that no community among mankind, can ever be so nicely regulated, but that many good men will lose their due reward, while many wicked ones evade the laws. Some will be exalted, above their merit; Others be disgraced and degraded, beneath what they deserve.

Here then you will easily perceive the peculiar glory of Christ, and his kingdom. His laws proceed from the Fountain of Truth; injoin you nothing, but pure virtue, and essential duties. They have no other end, but the honour of the great God, and the universal welfare of his people: are far superior to all weak partiality, all respect of persons. Moreover. In executing these laws, your all-perfect Judge, can neither err, nor be deceived; and is utterly incapable of departing wilfully from the truth, or perverting judgment. He sees the secret workings of every breast, the latent spring of every action, the exact state and circumstances of every case.

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## S E R M O N XXXI. 351

has infinite power, directed by infinite goodness, in his own hands. His sentence therefore, upon every virtuous, upon every guilty Christian, will be that happy mixture of justice and mercy, which is the highest praise of a Judge; the highest blessing of all governments, and of the men who live under them. All which the Psalmist has summed up, in these few beautiful words; that give us so pleasing, and at the same time so awful an idea, of the Divine Majesty! "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."

There is one circumstance more, that must by no means be forgotten; in which the Kingdom of Christ differs from, as well as incomparably surpasses, all earthly monarchies and principalities: namely, "its stability, its duration."

The kingdoms of this world, are liable to perpetual changes and revolutions. Princes are mortal, like other human Beings; are exposed to even more numerous accidents, to more fatal dangers. Their subjects are daily dying off, and new ones succeeding. They are often stript in a moment of all their  
splendor,

## SERMON XXXI.

splendor, by some potent adversary abroad, some ambitious rival or conspirator at home. The mightiest cities or seats of empire, the world has ever seen, have long ago been laid in ruins, and are utterly come to nothing.

Now here again, you will remark another distinguishing quality of the Messiah's kingdom. He is an Eternal Sovereign. "His dominion," says the prophet Daniel, "is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that, which shall not be destroyed." Therefore all his faithful people, when they have once passed the gate of Death, shall die no more; but, through his goodness, and by his power, shall be raised from the Grave, to endless felicity. Then will those striking words of the same great prophet, be completely verified. "They that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever!"

5thly



highly therefore; if you recollect the illustration I have given of the Text, you can be at no loss to understand, Why your Saviour's religion, or government over you, is so repeatedly called in Scripture, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven; a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of glory, and the like. You will immediately be sensible, that these sublime titles are, with the greatest propriety, conferred upon it, for the following reasons.

First, to raise your idea of it, far above the transient grandeur, the imperfect governments, of the present world.

Secondly, because, though the Gospel pays all due regard to mens worldly condition and happiness; yet these are not its prime, its capital object; but the welfare of our souls --- the improvement of the Mind, our divine, immortal Part.

Thirdly, because the blessings, promised to all its sincere professors, do not, can not, consist, in the short-lived pleasures, or emoluments, of this life; but in the unfading, unspeakable, joys of heaven.

6. I shall conclude with reminding you, of what the Scripture has told us: namely, that

Soon after Christ was risen from the dead,  
 He ascended into Heaven; to take possession of this spiritual kingdom, I have so often mentioned.

"God," says St. Paul, "hath raised Him  
 "from the dead, and set Him at his own  
 "right hand in the heavenly places; far  
 "above all principality, power, might, and  
 "dominion." So St. Peter informs you, that  
 He "is gone into heaven, and is on the  
 "right hand of God; Angels, Authorities,  
 "and Powers, being made subject unto  
 "Him."

Into these blessed mansions therefore, as our  
 Lord also himself expressly assures us; into  
 these blessed habitations He is gone before,  
 that He may prepare a place for Us, and re-  
 ceive us to Himself; if we humbly endeavour  
 to be worthy of his reception; if we  
 conscientiously practise the great things He  
 has taught us. For the rewards of his  
 kingdom in heaven, will not be given, like  
 preferments in this world, to them that have  
 most interest, but to them that have most  
 merit---to them that have faithfully obeyed  
 his laws, and behaved as dutiful subjects of  
 his kingdom here upon earth. How far the  
 doctrine,



doctrine I have been explaining, will help to make us so; What lessons of duty towards Him, and each other, we should all draw from it;---is a point, that shall be considered, and will well deserve your attention, when we meet again.

To the King Eternal---

Into these blessed mansions therefore, as our Lord also himself expressly assures us; into these blessed habitations He is gone before, that He may prepare a place for Us, and receive us to Himself; if we humbly endeavour to be worthy of his redemption; if we conscientiously practice the great things He has taught us. For the rewards of his kingdom in heaven, will not be given, like preferments in this world, to them that have most interest, but to them that have most merit---to them that have faithfully obeyed his laws, and behaved as dutiful subjects of his kingdom here upon earth. How far the

doctrine has been explaining will help to make us so; What lesson of duty towards Him, and ourselves, we should all draw from His dying and rising again, when and with well-deserve your attention, when we meet again in the land of the living.

### To the King Eternal

My dear friends, the kingdom of God is not a worldly kingdom, it is a spiritual kingdom, it is a kingdom of the living, it is a kingdom of the future, it is a kingdom of the eternal.

**I**n a former discourse upon this words, I undertook to give you their full meaning, by showing you

I. What was our Saviour's original, particular view, when He declared, that "His Kingdom is not of this world"

II. In what sense, it is generally and universally true, that "Christ is not a worldly King"

The Text, I told you, is part of the discourse which our Lord made before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, to whom He had been accused by the Chief Priests, and scribes, as "setting himself up for King of the Jews, in rebellion against Caesar and the Roman Power."



## S E R M O N XXXII.

JOHN xviii. 36.

*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.*

**I**N a former discourse upon these words, I undertook to give you their full meaning; by shewing you,

I. What was our Saviour's original, particular view, when He declared, that "His kingdom is not of this world;"

II. In what senses, it is generally and universally true, that "Christ's is not a worldly kingdom."

The Text, I told you, is part of the defence which our Lord made before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, to whom He had been accused by the Chief Priests and Scribes, as "Setting himself up for King of the Jews, in rebellion against Cesar and the Roman Power, under which the Jews,

with all the neighbouring nations, were at that time tributary.

By insisting therefore, that "his kingdom is not of this world;" our Saviour's immediate intention was, to assure Pilate, that Though He was indeed a king, yet his kingdom was such a one, as could not possibly interfere with Cesar's kingdom, or be the least injurious to the Roman interest, either in Judea, or any where else. If his kingdom were not of this world, Pilate and Cesar cared nothing about it. It was exactly the same to them, as if He had been no King at all.

For illustrating what our Lord here asserts, I remarked to you, that the government which Christ and his religion exercise over mankind, is not a civil or temporal, but altogether a moral, spiritual, government; that it is a kingdom of reason and virtue, over mens wills and hearts and consciences; that moreover its subjects, are to have their final habitation, and each his proper recompence of reward or punishment, not in this life, but in another world, at a future tribunal.

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I further observed to you, that this spiritual empire founded by our blessed Master, incomparably surpasses, in duration, in the purity of its laws, above all in the consummate equity with which those laws will be executed, all the transient kingdoms, all the imperfect governments, that ever were, or ever can be, erected upon earth.

Lastly; I reminded you, that the great Use of this, as of every other scripture doctrine, and our grand concern as a christian people, is to behave like dutiful subjects under this celestial kingdom; to secure ourselves an admission into those blest abodes, whither our gracious Redeemer is gone before, that He may prepare a place for us, and receive us to Himself.

III. With hopes of instructing and establishing you in such a behaviour, I shall now shew you, what practical lessons we should learn, what powerful motives to virtue may be drawn, from the consideration that "Christ's kingdom is not of this world." If Christ's kingdom be not of this world; it plainly follows, that his subjects, or disciples, such among them

especially as are appointed to teach his doctrines, to recommend and enforce his precepts, must not be men of this world--- I mean, they must not be worldly-minded men.

For I am far from thinking it incumbent upon any Christian, to abstract himself from all thoughts about the present world, from all connection with it, or relation to it: which is impossible in nature, and would absolutely take away the means, the very subject-matter, of our virtue. But thus much I may with great confidence affirm--- that we should not set our whole affections, as we now so commonly do, upon the present world; that we should consider ourselves as subjects of another kingdom, as candidates for the blessings of that future world, which is to be our final rest, our eternal home. Since, if the Scripture had been quite silent, universal experience, our own internal feelings, warn us every day and every hour, that "Here we have no continuing city," no fixed abode, no lasting interest!

Let your hearts be ever so closely, ever so strongly attached, to wealth, or power,

OF



or sensual pleasures; it will avail you nothing! You must quickly leave them all behind you! And the more passionately you delight in these vanities, the severer temptations will they expose you to, the more bitter will be the thoughts of parting from them! When you have been hooping up money, with infinite anxiety; by all the worldly and wicked arts, that ruin mens characters, as well as their consciences; with what face can you meet the approach of Death, or hear the dreadful summons—

“Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”

Upon the whole then, it is clear beyond a doubt, what should be our first object;—what is the point, towards which every man's conduct should be directed;—namely, ‘To use this life, and all its enjoyments, with moderation; to allow them no more, than their just value; to keep himself pure from the corruptions of the world, and fit for the conversation of that blessed society, wherof we all one day hope to partake.’ “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.”

is the sum of christian morality. The reason assigned for which divine command, is as evident, as it is wise and important---

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the Will of God, abideth for ever."

2. Since Christ's kingdom is not of this world, nor consequently its rewards and punishments; you must not be shocked, if, in the present disposition of human things, You sometimes see goodness go unrewarded, and wickedness as often escape unpunished: to which our Saviour's doctrine, now before us, gives this easy, undeniable, solution--- that "Our present life is not a state of retribution, but of discipline and trial. Therefore it would not be proper, indeed it is utterly inconsistent with such a state, that rewards and punishments from the hand of God, should immediately follow, or precisely answer, the present virtues and vices of men."

Could you suppose Almighty vengeance, to hang continually visible, over our heads: is it not obvious, that such a constant terror would entirely destroy our liberty of acting, and consequently our virtue, or the whole merit



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merit of our actions, along with that liberty?

Virtuous men therefore are injured, and afflicted; the wicked are permitted to prosper, and their punishment is seemingly delayed; in short, there is a promiscuous variety of good and evil, throughout the present world; not from the want of government in our Lord's kingdom, but from the very nature of his government; that for our patience and fortitude may be exercised; that the sinner may have time to repent; that our pious submission to the Divine Will, may be proved; that our faith in God, may become exemplary to the world:

---And all this, with a view to the great day of accounts, the solemn day of reckoning, when Christ shall universally judge mankind; and "plentifully reward the proud doer;" when the tyrant and the oppressor will each look back upon his prosperous villainy, with inexpressible horror; and every good man, with as unspeakable comfort, shall find his God his omnipotent Friend and Patron.

This is the lesson, uniformly taught in scripture; is consonant to reason, to our  
 know own

own best reflections; and abundantly explains the present appearances of things, abundantly justifies the wisdom of the supreme providential Governor. "If," says the Royal Preacher, "thou seest the oppression of the poor, or violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province; marvel not at the matter. For He that is higher than the highest, regardeth: and there be higher than they."

The conclusion is a most joyful one!—If each man amongst us, does but honestly endeavour to discharge his own proper duty; he may safely trust the event with the all-knowing, all-sufficient, Director and Disposer of all things!

3. As Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and interferes with no kingdoms, or governments, which are of this world; it follows, that A man may, at the same time, be a subject of the christian kingdom, and of any earthly kingdom, or of any human government whatever.

It cannot but occur to every creature who reads the New Testament; that our blessed Master has prescribed nothing, about mens secular, political, affairs; nor even speaks a  
word,



word, against any particular modes, or forms, of human government. On the contrary, Christians are expressly commanded, both by Himself and his Apostles, to Obey the powers that be, as being all ordained of God, in whatever external shape they may appear, or exercise the authority God has given them.

What Christianity enjoins about this matter, is indeed as plain, as it is excellent; that "We fear God, and love our neighbour; that we live in mutual fidelity and subjection;" that "we render unto all their dues;"--that "we do justice, and shew mercy, towards all men, from a regard to the Sovereign Power, which presides over us all; from a sense of duty to the common Lord and Father, who created both princes and their people, and will impartially reward and punish them Both."

Such are the salutary maxims of the Gospel! Which concern us all alike, which equally bind the Governors and the Governed. And in proportion as the members of any community observe them, in such proportion must that community, be it Monarchy, or

Republick,

Republick, or by whatever name you call it, flourish and prosper. Since they are the fundamental laws of all good government, socially, civilly, civilized, life. They are the only maxims, upon which it is possible for us to be happy together, I do not say, in the next state, but in the present one.

On the other hand, it is the want of these principles, or, which is still worse, the disregard of them, that has overthrown all terrestrial kingdoms and common-wealths, since the world began. It is this, that makes nation rise against nation, man against man; that creates the innumerable miseries of war and bloodshed abroad, of sedition, rebellion, and distractions, at home. From whence come wars and fightings amongst us, is a scripture-question: And I defy you, with all your invention, to produce any other than the scripture-answer. Even from "our lusts, that war in our members."

But, 4thly: As the Gospel confines its professors to no particular kind of civil government, nor ever concerns itself with civil affairs, nor gives any directions about them; so neither does it restrain us to any particular modes of religion, or to any External

of



of divine worship: It ties us down, I say, to no determined rules; but has left these things, as indeed they must be left, to mens own discretion---to be regulated by their situations, and various circumstances; by the condition of other things about them; by the changes of times, manners, and customs.

Therefore every pious, upright man, who seriously believes his Bible; who conscientiously practises its sacred moral precepts, and "worships his Maker in spirit and in truth;"---every such man is inwardly and essentially a good christian, and a worthy son of Christs universal Church, whether he belongs to this or that particular congregation of christians, or has been trained up in this or that particular outward form of devotion.

gthly. If what I have advanced in the two preceding sections, be true; if men may be good subjects of the christian kingdom, under different sorts of human government, under different external modes of religion or worship;---how striking, how indisputable, is the inference!---that therefore 'Christians of every country, of every denomination, as fellow-subjects of this celestial kingdom of righteousness and peace, should unite in  
' charity,

'charity, in brotherly love; bearing with each other's prejudices, or different opinions; making all candid and favourable allowances for them.'

Wherever men consent in the fundamentals of piety, in the great capital points of faith and practice; to quarrel and lose all temper about inferior matters, as christian people, even Christian Divines, have so frequently done, is not barely idle---it is offensive, it is criminal! If they can but agree concerning the substance (which substance is so manifest; that one would think they could not possibly mistake it) they have an undoubted right to please themselves in the garb they clothe it with. Our common Lord and Master has given us that right. How then dare we presume to withhold it from each other!

My whole meaning is this---Whoever sincerely reverences his Creator, sincerely loves his fellow-creatures; He, and He only, will appear at last, when the merits of all causes shall be known, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, to have the genuine christian spirit. The rest of religion (even of Christianity itself) depends; it cannot but depend, upon education, upon fashion, upon  
those



those nameless and numberless accidents, which for ever did, and for ever will, distinguish one man, as well as one set of men, from another.

6thly, I will beg your attention, while I just observe to You, ‘How very naturally ‘the last remark turns our thoughts upon ‘the degenerate, apostate, spirit of Popery’ ---Which grants no toleration, no liberty of conscience, no right of private judgment. Which allows no man to be a christian, or within a possibility of salvation, unless he be a member of the Romish Church. Persecuting all others, even unto death. Branding them for Hereticks, and impiously excluding them from all favour of God, from all share in his heavenly kingdom.

What a scheme of religion ! What a principle of blind bigotry, ‘cherished by wicked worldly policy ! Whose sole object is, “To ‘keep men in eternal ignorance ; to enslave ‘their minds, as well as their persons !’

Pray God defend us against this spiritual tyranny, and preserve us all in his true faith, in a right understanding of his holy word ! May the great Saviour’s doctrine, but especially may his blessed Example of meekness and

patience, inspire all Protestants with nobler sentiments ! May they raise our hearts to that generous humanity towards all men, which is the perfection of virtue, the highest glory of a Christian ; which will infallibly render us acceptable to God ; will make us faithful servants and subjects, both of his visible kingdom here below, and of his everlasting kingdom above !

I shall finish these discourses, with a few passages from scripture, which will inform you, infinitely better than all human words can do, ‘ What are the qualities of a ‘ real Believer in Christ ;’ what is the spirit, that should govern every private Christian, every community of Christians, throughout all their transactions, whether religious or civil ; if they entertain a wish above the earth they tread upon, or ever aspire to a place in the kingdom of heaven.

“ Learn from Me” says the heavenly Law-giver and Pattern of Goodness ; “ for I am meek and lowly in heart.” And again, “ Blessed are the poor in spirit :” (the meaning is, blessed are humble, peaceable men) “ for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

More—



Moreover; when some persons brought young children to our Lord, that He might put his hands upon them, and give them his blessing; his disciples it seems, rebuked the people that brought them. But, "when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased; and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

At another time, the Twelve jealous of one another, who should be the leading man, the man of most authority, in the Messiah's kingdom; "came to Jesus saying, Who is" (which among us shall be) "greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus calling a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted"---if ye do not entirely lay aside these groveling earthly notions of Greatness---"and become as little children; ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." "Ye  
' quite

“quite mistake your case, and totally mis-  
 “understand the nature of my government,”  
 says this Prince of Righteousness. It is not  
 “a spirit of ambition and envy, it is not a  
 “high conceit of your own merits; but in-  
 “nocent, modest virtue; that alone can ad-  
 “vance you to the honours of my kingdom,  
 “or make you great in the sight of God.”

In the same strain of pure, [divine, mo-  
 rality, St. Paul exhorts the Colossians:  
 “Put on therefore, as the elect of God holy  
 “and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness,  
 “humbleness of mind, meekness, long-  
 “suffering,; forbearing one another, and  
 “forgiving one another.”

So St. Peter, whose words I shall leave  
 with you, and conclude: “Giving all dili-  
 “gence, add to your faith, virtue; to vir-  
 “tue, knowledge; to knowledge, tempe-  
 “rance; to temperance, patience; to pa-  
 “tience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly  
 “kindness; to brotherly kindness, charity.  
 “For if ye do these things, ye shall never  
 “fall: and so an entrance shall be mini-  
 “stred unto you abundantly, into the ever-  
 “lasting kingdom of our Saviour Christ.”



Whoever believes the foregoing Scriptures, cannot entertain a doubt, What it is, which denominates a Christian---What is the singleness of heart, the simplicity and chastity of manners, which constitutes that amiable character. I shall only add therefore, how infinitely it concerns us, if we have any sense of these scriptures, or any solicitude about our own salvation, to lay the sacred Original before us ; and, upon every occasion, to copy it as closely, to resemble it as nearly in our practise, as we are able.

To the King Eternal---

End of the SECOND VOLUME.

MEMORANDUM

On the subject of the proposed  
amendment to the charter, which  
provides for the election of  
members of the board of directors  
by the stockholders, it is  
submitted that the amendment  
is not necessary, as the  
present charter already provides  
for the election of members  
of the board of directors  
by the stockholders.

Very respectfully,  
The Board of Directors

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